



*Ethel's adventures in
the doll country*

Clara Bradford, T. Pym



LEIGHTON, BROS.

ETHEL'S

ADVENTURES

IN THE DOLL COUNTRY.

BY

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With Coloured and Plain
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AT THE GATE OF THE DOLL COUNTRY.

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TO

THE CHILDREN OF

THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES

The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh



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CHAPTER I.

ETHEL'S WISH.

“ FEEL very unhappy about the strange disappearance of my doll,” said Ethel to her Nurse, as she was being undressed for bed ; “ I have searched in all the rooms, and turned out the toy-closet five or six times, but I cannot find her anywhere ! Where do you think she is, Nurse ? ”

“ I really do not know, Miss Ethel. I have made inquiries of all the servants, and no one has seen her—perhaps your brothers have hidden her to tease you ! ”

“ I am afraid not,” was the disconsolate answer. “ Percy, Bertie, and Artie all say they have not touched her, and they are *certain* she was put into the ‘doll box.’ It seems so strange to lose her in this way.”

A

"Do you think she has run away to the Doll Country, Miss Ethel?" said Nurse, with a merry twinkle in her eyes.

Ethel looked up quickly.

"That is what mother says, but how could she go without any one seeing her? Besides, Nurse, she would scarcely attempt to run away again. You know I scolded her well the morning she was found standing by the hall door—besides that, we tried her by court-martial, and that is only a week ago to-day. But, oh dear! I do wish I knew where she is; it's too bad of her."

"Perhaps she is hiding somewhere, because she cannot forgive you for punishing her."

"Perhaps she is; still you see, Nurse, she deserved it. She tried to run away. Mother says every one ought to be punished when they do wrong. I am—and sometimes I don't think I deserve it. However, I am rather sorry now that I treated my doll as I did, because I feel sure I shall never see her again, poor thing."

And once more Ethel began hunting through the play-box for her lost treasure, till Nurse said at last—

"Well, dear, don't trouble your little head any more

to-night; we will have another search to-morrow, and perhaps we may find her. See—here is your pretty baby-doll to comfort you, meantime.”

But Ethel shook her curly head.

“No, thank you. I don’t care for Cyril to-night. Put him in his own bed, please.”

And then she submitted to be put to bed and tucked up comfortably; and with a parting injunction to the little girl to try and go to sleep like a good child, nurse left the room.

“All very well for nurse to say, ‘*Go to sleep,*’” said Ethel to herself. “How can I? I don’t feel a bit sleepy. My eyes won’t shut, and I *can’t* sleep with them open!”

Her own words banished the memory of her lost doll from her mind for the time, and she fell into a funny train of speculation, little ripples of laughter every now and then breaking from her rosy lips.

“How funny people would look lying in bed *asleep*, with wide-open eyes! just like great big dolls! Suppose no one could close their eyes without help! and that there were funny sort of little men, like I have seen in pictures, with long noses and pointed toes, who did nothing else but shut

people's eyes! or—suppose, we all closed each other's eyes!—but then, who would close the eyes of the person going to bed last? Somebody must be last! One thing I am sure of, I would never be that one, for then I should be obliged to sleep with them open! And those silly little midges, or something, would be sure to fly in. What fun it would be, too, if no one could shut my brothers' eyes but myself! Whenever Percy or Bertie had been teasing me, or my dolls, I should be able to punish them finely;” and at this thought Ethel laughed very heartily.

“When bed-time came, and they ran to me to have their eyes shut, I would say in a stern voice—‘No, boys, you have been very unkind to my children to-day! therefore I sentence you to sleep with them open!’ It would be like holding a court-martial over them, the same as they do with my dolls. With tears they would beseech of me to relent, but I would remain firm, and when they had been in bed a little time I would creep into their room, to see how they looked. Poor boys! I am afraid then I should be obliged to forgive them, if they looked very uncomfortable.”

Soon Ethel's thoughts flew off again to something else.

"Mother talks about the Doll Country, but is there really such a place? I wonder where it is! and how do you get to it? I daresay if it does exist the dolls and toys go there whenever they like, and please themselves about returning. I wonder if there are any fairies there! For there *are* fairy dolls, I know, because I have had some.

"Now, suppose a fairy came to me to-night, and said, 'Ethel, you shall have *one* wish granted, what shall it be?' I would say, '*Take me to the Doll Country*, please.'"

Just at that minute Ethel started, for she saw a little goat with a doll on its back running past her.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, "there's my 'Robinson Crusoe' doll riding on Bertie's goat! What a funny thing! Wherever can they be going! Can they possibly be off to the Doll Country for the night! The doll's left leg is broken, I know, and as he cannot walk the goat is taking him, I suppose. What a kind action! I had no idea that toys were so thoughtful of each other! But how very funny they do look. Big Crusoe riding on the little goat. Did the real Robinson Crusoe's goat ever carry him about the desert island, I wonder? But no—of course not—how stupid of

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me! of course it couldn't. It is much more likely that Crusoe carried the goat. What a hurry they appear to be in! I am glad I happened to see them."

In fact, Ethel was so glad that she determined to follow them, and slipping very quietly out of bed, she popped her



feet into her shoes, put on her dressing-gown, "for fear," as she said, "of catching one of those horrid colds which always make one sneeze just when one doesn't want to," and hurried after the toys in the growing hope that they might lead her to the Doll Country.



CHAPTER II.

THE BIRCH ROD.



ETHEL went very softly at first after the goat; she was afraid Crusoe would turn his head and see her. But she soon forgot that fear, and everything else, in surprise.

“Dear me,” she thought, “what a funny place I have got to!”

It was an avenue of trees which met overhead, and through whose branches she thought at first that she saw the moon shining, but it turned out to be nothing but a Chinese lantern, with two red eyes which stared at her threateningly, and looked as though they said, “Go back! go back!”

However, Ethel only laughed at them.

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“You need not look at me in that way,” she said. “I am not afraid of Chinese lanterns ! I have seen dozens of them at a time. We had our nursery decorated with them once, though I did not know before that they had eyes. Perhaps ours were baby lanterns, and their eyes had to grow like kittens.”

At this moment her meditations were interrupted, for the goat began to run ; Crusoe had seen Ethel, and was trying to escape her.

“Oh dear me !” she exclaimed. “Good-bye, old lantern ; I must run too.”

But she could not move ! she tried to lift first one foot, then the other, but it was useless. She got very angry, and struck at the trees ; they were close to her now, which Ethel thought strange, for she had not noticed that the pathway had become narrower with every step she took, until she was now almost hemmed in.

“Oh dear !” she cried piteously, “I shall be suffocated ! Help ! help !”

And again she beat at the trees until her little hands were quite sore. Then suddenly she found that she was beating

at nothing. How it happened she never knew, but all in a moment she found herself in a large field. The grass was very deep, and amidst it beautiful red, white, and yellow poppies, with other wild flowers, grew in great profusion.

“What lovely flowers! I would like some to put in my nursery,” murmured Ethel, “but nurse says the poppies are thunder flowers—so if I wish to see the Doll Country I suppose I had better not gather them, for if a thunderstorm came on I should have to run home again of course. So, dear poppies, although you are certainly very pretty, I will leave you to bloom in peace.”

When Ethel, after this little speech, once more turned her attention from the flowers, she saw the goat a long way off. He was running very quickly, and by his side was Crusoe's sweetheart “Alice,” with her pink silk hood drawn closely round her face.

“Well, really,” thought Ethel, “there is another of my dolls! where has she sprung from? I did not see her before, but of course there may be some other road to Doll Land than the one I came by.”

With this reflection she once more hastened on, and soon

she saw in the distance a tall gate, or it might be a stile, but that it was higher than stiles generally are in this world. But whether stile or gate, it evidently led somewhere, and Ethel sighed gladly.

“No doubt that must be the gate of the Doll Country. If the goat would only stop until I get up to him the one opening of it would do for us all.”

But the goat had evidently no intention of doing anything of the kind. He went quicker and quicker, and finally disappeared suddenly. But where? Ethel could not tell, she had not taken her eyes from him, and yet he was gone without her seeing how!

“This is very tiresome,” she murmured, “and the gates have gone too! all my journey for nothing, and I do feel so tired. I think I will rest a while.”

She sat down on the grass, and leaned her head against some tall, bright flowers.

“Sit up, you lazy child!” said a harsh voice.

Ethel started, and turned her head, and discovered that the flowers had gone, and she was now leaning against a *birch rod*! It had two greenish sort of eyes like a cat's, a

huge mouth, and little feet and hands. More than this, it was not alone. It had hundreds of companions as it appeared to Ethel, and they formed a wall, at the end of



which she saw the same gates as before. That at least was a comfort, for the reappearance of the gates gave her courage, and sitting up she said quickly—

“ You need not be so cross, Mr. Rod. I would not have

leant against you for the world had I known what you were. You are no favourite of mine, I can assure you."

"Ha ! ha !" said the Rod, grinning till its mouth almost



met all round it—" Ah, ha ! little miss, you are no exception to the rule. All children dislike us, and, to tell you the truth, we are rather proud of the fear in which we are held.

But do you know, some people, and I am one of them, consider that no nursery is complete without us ? ”

“ We never had one in ours, however,” said Ethel.

“ More’s the pity,” sighed the Rod.

Meantime, during this conversation the other rods had walked down past Ethel, or rather the road must have been a telescopic road, and been gradually shutting itself up, for Ethel was certain she had not moved, so the road and the rods must have been drawing themselves in, for she was now standing close to the gates in their midst.

“ What funny gates ! ” was her first remark. “ Whatever are they made of ? ”

They certainly were queer enough to excite remark. Ethel could see legs, arms, and heads with long beards. She went a little closer to examine them, when, all at once, the mouths opened and shut ! Ethel felt rather frightened.

“ What can these figures be ? ”

“ O Ethel, Ethel ! ” said a voice, “ don’t you recognise us ? We are jumping Jacks ! Ha ! ha ! don’t you see ? ”

“ I do now,” said Ethel, laughing heartily. “ How stupid I must be not to have known you at once. But I think you

are almost as senseless as I was, you stupid things, throwing your legs and arms about in that ridiculous manner."

"Thank you," said one of the "Jacks," "come a little nearer and we will kick you."

"I'm extremely obliged to you, but I don't feel inclined to be kicked," and she turned away, sighing. "Oh dear! I do feel so tired, I wish there was something I could sit down on, except the damp grass."

"Sit on us," said the rods politely.

"No, thank you. I admire you from a distance."

"Ah! but do, dear," said the rods in persuasive tones.

But Ethel still shook her curly head, and the next instant found herself walking down what appeared to be a kind of wide lane, with a great many trees dotted about.

"Dear, dear me!" she cried, "where are those gates gone now? Can I possibly be on the other side of them! But if so, how did I get through without knowing it? And where is my dressing-gown—and my slippers?"

Ethel might well ask, for she was now dressed in one of her white frocks tied with a pale-blue sash, and

with her kid shoes on her little feet. She was greatly astonished.

“How has it all happened, I wonder!” she exclaimed.

“You are too young to wonder,” said a voice; “besides, you surely would not pay visits in your dressing-gown?”

“Who said that?” asked Ethel.

But there was no answer, and she added—

“It must have been my imagination, I suppose. Mother says I have a very vivid one sometimes;” and she walked slowly on, looking very eagerly about her. At last she remarked contemptuously—

“If this is the Doll Country, I don’t think much of it. It looks very uninteresting at present. And yet what else can it be? If those ‘Jacks’ formed the gates of it—and I am on the other side of them, why—I must be in the Doll Country.”

“How well she reasons,” said the voice again. “We feel quite honoured in having such an intelligent visitor, my dear.”

“Who’s *we*?” inquired Ethel.

“Why, *we’s we*,” said the voice.

"That was not my imagination," said Ethel. "Some one must be here."

But she could see nothing but the trees and the wall of birch-rods, and she said impatiently—

"You're stupid things, whoever you are; why don't you speak plain instead of saying 'we's we'?"

Still—no answer.

"Did you speak?" she said at last, turning to the rods.

Immediately Ethel saw hundreds of green eyes looking at her, and big mouths wide open to answer.

"Oh dear! I'm sorry I spoke!" she exclaimed. "Pray close your mouths again; it would be more becoming, I can assure you."


The mouths closed most obediently, but the eyes remained open, and Ethel walked on.





CHAPTER III.

THE MONKEYS, AND A FEW YARDS OF CHRISTMAS TREE.

“HAT funny little trees they have in this country,” said Ethel, looking about her as she walked through this unknown land. “There are no leaves on them.

But that reminds me, perhaps they are foreign ones! I have read of palm trees, and some other kinds, I don’t remember the name of them now, that had only a big bunch spreading out at the top; so these must be foreign ones, of course, because there is something on the top of them. But whatever is it? not leaves certainly—I will touch it.”

Ethel went up to the tree, and was just putting her hand out when a brown head lifted itself up, and said in a sleepy tone—

B

“ Why do you disturb folks, when they are having ‘ forty winks ’ ? ”



Ethel drew back quickly, saying—“ Why ! it isn't a tree, it's a monkey ! ”

“What else did you suppose I was? shake hands!”

“Shake hands, indeed! no, thank you. Go away, you nasty little thing—I can’t bear you, you are so ugly,” was Miss Ethel’s indignant answer.

Whereupon the “ugly thing” gave a shrill whistle, and immediately a lot of little monkeys with red coats on ran down each tree, stood and looked at Ethel, and then ran up again.

“I might well think them funny trees,” said Ethel, laughing; “they are nothing but yellow sticks with these horrid little creatures on them. And how you do chatter,” she added after a moment; “one can scarcely hear one’s self speak.”

“Why did you disturb us, then, when we were taking our after-dinner nap?” they retorted.

“I’m very sorry I did,” said Ethel. “I would not have disturbed you for the world if I had known.”

“Ah, well! never mind,” they said amicably. “Shake hands, and be friends. What have you brought us?”

“I won’t shake hands, and I have brought you nothing,” said Ethel.

"What!" they screamed, "go to see monkeys, and not take them something; stupid, disagreeable girl!"

"Umph! I only wish I had some nuts to give them, after all," thought Ethel; "people do take them to the monkeys in the Zoological Gardens—generally, of course, and no doubt toy monkeys expect them in the toy country. What shall I do!" She put her hand into her pocket to feel if perhaps she might have one or two left from yesterday's dessert, and found that it was *full of them*.

"What an extraordinary thing," she said; "how did they get into my pocket? I am not allowed to have more than six at a time. How displeased mother would be if she knew I had all these,—at least, if she thought that I should eat them."

"Here! you very ugly little things; take those, if you must have something," she added aloud, and she threw a handful on the ground, when the monkeys instantly jumped down, commenced cracking the nuts, and then pelted poor Ethel with the shells.

"There's gratitude for you!" she exclaimed.

"Don't expect gratitude in this country," said a harsh voice.

Ethel turned round, and lo and behold! there was the same birch rod that she had seen outside the gates.



“Well, I’m sure! *you* here again,” she said, tossing her head; “I thought I had parted company with you long ago.”

"In-deed!" said the Rod; "did you? what business has a little girl like you to think at all? you ought to allow other people to think for you;" and he came close to her; "when little girls think," he continued, "they generally think wrong, because—they think their own way best."

"You are very rude!" said Ethel in an indignant tone; "and I won't speak to you any more."

"Well, but don't lose your temper, my dear, at any rate," was the taunting answer; "you may want it some other time, you know."

Ethel pouted. "I wish I had not come to this country at all; I have always imagined it to be such a lovely place, with beautiful things in it, instead"——

"So it has! so it has!" said the Rod, interrupting her before she could say any more; "*look at me!*" and he placed himself in an attitude before her.

Ethel's crimson lips parted, and her blue eyes opened very wide.

"*You*, indeed; surely you do not consider *yourself* beautiful?"

"Indeed but I do, though," he answered promptly;

“and, at any rate, *I* am the means of making little folks beautiful; a few applications of me prove beneficial in many cases, for removing cross faces and pouting lips;” and he grinned at Ethel in a most self-complacent manner.

“You vain, spiteful, little thing!” she said. “If I had you in my nursery I would burn you. If I could only find those gates again, and get back through them, I would go home. I have no wish to see any more of this country. You are all very rude, and evidently do not know how to treat your visitors.”

“*Uninvited* visitors are never welcome,” said the Rod. “If you had sent us word you were coming you might have been treated differently, and at any rate we should have expected you.”

“Of course you would have expected me, when you knew I was coming,” retorted Ethel.

“Yes, just so, any one knows *that*,” said the Rod, “so pray don’t pretend to be sharper than other folks. But now, while we are chatting so comfortably you must tell me”——

“We are not chatting comfortably at all,” interrupted

Ethel pettishly, "and I should like to know how long you intend to keep me here, for whether I was invited or not I can assure you my visit was not to *you*."

"Who said it was, my dear?" grinned the Rod.

"Go away, or I will break you to pieces," exclaimed Ethel angrily, and she tried to get hold of him—but she only seized the air, the Rod was gone.

"Ha! ha! don't — lose — your — tem-per!" she heard shouted in the distance, the last word being scarcely audible.

"Well, at any rate I have frightened him off at last, I am glad to say," said Ethel, with a relieved face. "Now I can look about me a little in peace;" and turning round as she spoke, she found herself close to a wall made of trees, not monkey-trees this time but real ones; on which hung pretty coloured balls, flags, toys, crackers, drums, trumpets, scent packets, and wax candles in little silver candlesticks. Her rosy face brightened up at last till it literally beamed with joy.

"How delightful!" she exclaimed. "Come, this *is* a decided improvement. I had come to the conclusion that the 'Doll Country' was anything but nice."

“Never come to conclusions,” said a harsh voice; “wait until they come to you.”

Ethel actually shivered, and her face clouded again. There was that birch rod back again, the meddling thing. “Well, however,” she sensibly decided, “he shall not spoil all my pleasure this time,” and she proceeded to examine the wall.

“What were the decorations for?” she wondered, till at last a thought struck her, and she cried, “Why, it is a Christmas tree! And oh, what a beauty! this is what I call a *sensible* sort of a Christmas tree, one that would take days to examine. I think the people in our world are sometimes stingy over Christmas trees; they just get a small one, that you can strip in a few minutes, and then the fun is over—but this tree must be miles long; I wonder if I could walk all along it, and round to the other side? I should like to see all the things on it. Next Christmas tree we have I shall just come here, and take whatever I like from this one.”

“Will you though, really?” said the voice of the Rod. “We have a little proverb in this country, ‘Admire all, but pocket none.’”

"That is stingy of you," said Ethel ; " you have evidently not been well brought up yourself, whatever you may do for other people. The *generous* part of your education has been neglected."

"That is a matter of opinion," replied the Rod ; " but your business is to remember the saying, Don't covet what does not belong to you !"

Ethel blushed a little ; she had been told that before. After a pause she said—

"Well, perhaps I might buy some ; I should think it is intended to be sold by the yard ; I wonder how much a yard it would be, and who I could buy some from ?"

"From me, to be sure," said the Rod ; " I would treat you well ; I am very fond of little girls."

"Are you, indeed ?" laughed Ethel ; " they are not fond of you, at any rate, as I told you before."

"I know they are not," he answered, and Ethel heard him chuckling so disagreeably, she considered, that she tried to stop him by asking him—

"Why don't they light the candles along this wall? A Christmas tree is nothing until it is lighted up, you know."

In an instant there was a blaze of light; for miles and miles Ethel could see the candles,—a long straight line, and the most beautiful music filled all the air round. She had never heard anything so charming in her life before.

“It must be like this in fairyland,” she murmured in breathless delight. “Many of my fairy-tale books describe music, played on unseen instruments. And my nurse tells me that the Queen has music while she eats her dinner. I wonder if it is as lovely as this? If it is, and I were queen, I would do nothing else all day but eat dinners.”

“Gree-dy girl,” said the voice of the Rod, “it is *you* who have not been well brought up; too much attention has been given to your eating capacities.”

“No such thing,” said Ethel indignantly. “I don’t mean I should want to eat a great deal, but just to sit and pretend, that the music might go on.”

“Little girls shouldn’t pretend,” said the Rod.

All the time this discussion was going on it must be mentioned that the Christmas-tree had been moving very slowly past Ethel—it now extended a long way on each side of her.

"How obliging," she said gladly. "*I* cannot walk round it, so it walks past me instead."

It went on walking past her for the next ten minutes or so, till at last she sighed—

"It is very nice certainly, but I am rather tired of it ; you can have too much of a good thing, when you are only allowed to look ; I should like something else now for a change."

Even as she spoke the pitter-patter of little feet was heard, and turning round she exclaimed—

"Why, there's the goat again !"

It was coming towards her accompanied by Crusoe and Alice.

She went forward to meet them, crying eagerly—

"Ah ! I will not lose sight of you this time."

"Don't stare at people ; it's rude !" cried a voice.

"Who said that ?" asked Ethel. No answer. She shrugged her shoulders—"It must be that Rod. He is always bothering himself about something or other of other folk's affairs."

She turned back to the goat and its companions, and was

just in time to see them pass through a door in the Christmas-tree wall, which shut fast again the moment they had entered.

“How provoking!” she exclaimed; “I did not see that door before.”

She ran forward and tried to open it, but could not, and saw a large placard over the Japanese sunshade portico, “*No admittance except on business.*”

“Oh,” said Ethel. “Under these circumstances, then I shall certainly get in, for I *am* on business. “I wish to find out where my dolls have gone; so open to me *at once!*”

“Immediately, if not sooner,” said the voice of the Rod. “Will you go in now, or wait until you are asked?”

“Neither one nor the other if *you* are there,” said Ethel, greatly irritated by the persistent little torment; and she turned away.

“Is she afraid of me already?” said the Rod. “P-o-o-r child.”

“I will look at the Christmas tree again,” thought Ethel,

“to make pretence I don't care to get in.” She turned to do so. But—lo and behold, it was gone!

“*This* is not a Christmas tree!” she exclaimed. “Why, it is a wall of books!”

Yes; there they were, some straight, some sideways, others upside down, some open, and others closed.

Ethel ran up and down to read the names. “Old Mother Hubbard,” “Bluebeard,” “Cinderella,” “The Cat's Tea Party,” “Dame Trot,” “The House that Jack Built,” and all the favourite nursery rhymes.

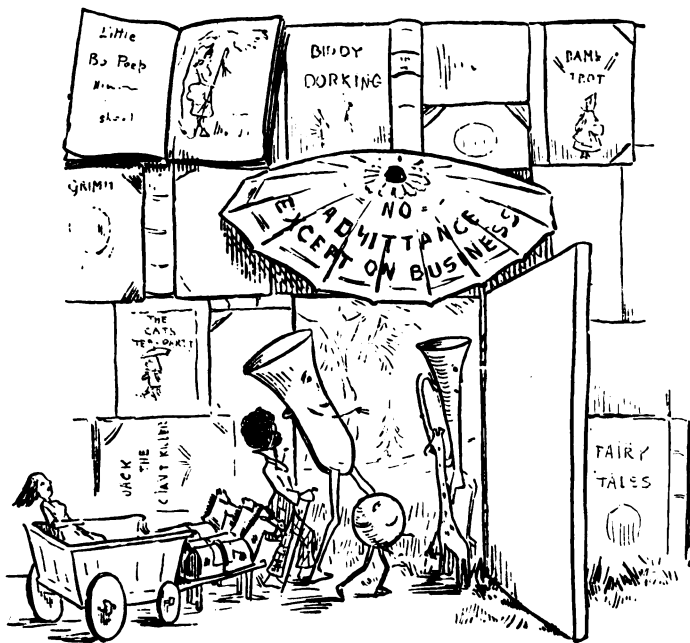
“Now just imagine a wall made of picture books”—she laughed. “Not very strong, I should think, because, if a shower of rain came on the books would all go soft. By the bye! how nice that would be for me!

“I wish it would rain now! the wall would fall, and I could step over it, and not trouble myself about the closed door, or that aggravating Rod.

“Suppose the walls of our houses were made of picture-books, instead of bricks!” she continued to soliloquise. “When you wanted a new book you could just go and take out a *brick*! there would be a hole, of course—but that

would not matter, it would ventilate the house. Only it would get rather serious if *all* the books were taken out! What should we do for a house then?"

"Build another," said a voice.



"That's all very well," answered Ethel, "but I should get tired of those sort of houses, I expect. One of that description would be quite sufficient, because as I got older the books would get older, I daresay, and I might be

compelled to live in a house made of geographies and grammars ! I have enough of those in school hours, and I am not *too* fond of them, even then. To have them staring at one in play hours and meal times would be too horrible.'

After a pause she continued—

"I often get into trouble over my lessons, and if houses were built of lesson books I should never go in unless I was obliged ; so I might turn into a cow, or a lamb in time perhaps, through staying in the fields too long."

She had just arrived at this very queer conclusion when she was suddenly attracted by a new spectacle.

"Goodness me, what a crowd !" she exclaimed, as she saw animals, carts and horses, drums, wheelbarrows, dancing niggers, and all sorts of toys coming towards her. They formed a procession, and all passed in through the same door that had opened to admit the goat.

"They are on business evidently," said Ethel. "But what business ? where are they going ?"

She pondered over this question for a few moments, then her face brightened.

"Ah, I begin to understand. Within that door is the

real Doll Country, I expect; this is the outskirts of it. I will get amongst them, and creep in unnoticed."

That was easier said than done. Ethel made many attempts, but found herself held back. She struggled desperately to free herself, but only succeeded just as the last toy was passing in. With one bound she was at the door; it shut in her face!

"Well, of *all* the rude countries, this is the rudest! *I* never shut the door in my visitors' faces."

"Don't lose your temper, my dear," said the voice of the Rod.

"I'm trying not to," said Ethel more gently than she had yet spoken, "but I never had such difficulty to keep it before."

"Patience is always rewarded," said a sweet voice, very different in tone to that of the Rod, and Ethel, to her joy and surprise, now saw by her side a pretty little fairy doll dressed in white satin, with wings, a wreath round her head, and in her hand she held a golden wand.



CHAPTER IV.

THE GOOD FAIRY.



“HERE have I seen you before?” asked Ethel; “your face is quite familiar to me.”

“I was on your last birthday cake,” said the Fairy; “but amongst all your beautiful presents I was overlooked, so I came back to the Doll Country, where I am now one of its good fairies. I have, however, often visited you again in the night, and have been grieved to hear so many complaints from your toys and dolls. In the procession you saw just now were many playthings that have once been in your nursery.”

“Ah! dear me!” said Ethel, “is it possible that they are still in existence?”

"Yes, to be sure!" said the Fairy, "all your cast-off play-things and toys have come here, and nothing would induce them to return to you."

"Indeed, I don't want them to do so," said Ethel in a scornful tone; "I don't care for old broken toys! I would burn them if they came back!"

"Hush!" said the Fairy.

"I won't!" said Ethel, once more frowning and looking very cross.

"That is a very rude expression," answered the Fairy in a grieved voice, "and very unladylike besides. And I warn you, you must be careful what you say in *this* country; the birch rods are our guardians, and they punish all incivility to us."

"And we enjoy doing it," said the voice of the Rod.
"Oh, don't we just, ah ha!"

"Yes, I know you do," said Ethel, "and you are fond of telling me so."

"You might not know it, you see, my dear child, if I did not tell you."

"How very clever you think yourself," said Ethel.

"So I am, my dear!" answered the Rod.

"Don't 'my dear' me," said Ethel, "I don't like it. And why are you hiding yourself, listening to what other people say?—why don't you come out, and show yourself like a man?"

"Because I'm not a man—I'm a Rod."

"There, child, don't mind him," said the Fairy, half smiling, "listen to me. Last night I stood by your bed, and heard you wish to visit the Doll Country, and so I allowed you to see the goat pass on his way here, that you might have it for a guide. I hope you are pleased?"

"Oh! yes indeed," answered Ethel eagerly. "But is this then really the Doll Country that I am in now?"

"No, Missie. At present you are only in the Toy Kingdom, which you must pass through before reaching the Doll Country. The birch rods, as I told you, are our guardians. Our very walls and hedges are composed of them, so if you wish to enjoy your visit here you see you really must be amiable to them."

"*Amiable!*" exclaimed Ethel, "do you suppose any little girl *could* be amiable to a birch rod?"



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WITH THE FAIRY IN JOYLAND.—Page 37.

"If they are not so to *us*, we make them so to *other people*," said the voice of the Rod.

"Dear me!" said Ethel, "if he only would not talk so much, and interfere so, I should be so much happier."

Ethel and the Fairy were now sitting side by side in a little wooden cart, drawn by two horses—who were moving at a good pace, though their stiff legs seemed to give them little help—painted white, with large black spots on their backs. They were driving down a country lane, the hedges of which were all birch rods; their green eyes were open, and they stared at Ethel as she passed, and said, in stern tones, "*Be civil, or beware of us.*"

"I do so dislike those rods," said Ethel.

"All little girls do the same," answered the Fairy. "If they are not good. Is it not strange?"

Miss Ethel did not much care about answering that question, so she changed the subject by saying—

"This is a funny sort of country, I think. Not at all like what I had pictured it to be. I expected to see such beautiful things,—and so far everything has been the reverse, excepting the glorious Christmas tree and your pretty little

self. I have so often wished to come here, and now—I am disappointed.”

“Wait a little,” said the Fairy; “have patience, and, as I said before, you shall be rewarded.”

As she spoke she took hold of Ethel's hand, and they mounted up in the air together.

How they left the cart Ethel did not know, but she could now see it under her; higher and higher they flew, until the cart looked like a speck on the ground.

“This is delightful,” said Ethel. “I have often wished to be a bird. I must at least have wings like one now, or how could I fly?”

“Of course you have wings, the same as mine,” said the Fairy; “can you not feel them?”

Ethel moved her shoulders up and down once or twice, and then cried, “Yes, I do now. This is charming. How I should like to have wings always. Sometimes my brothers and myself make wings of paper, and tie them on our backs—then we stand on the table, and try to fly—but we never succeed; we get many bumps instead. This is how the birds fly, I suppose? If I were a bird I would never be

caught, I'm sure. I would fly so high that no one would ever see me. But what should I do when I was hungry? Birds must be hungry sometimes, the same as little girls are—and there are no bread crumbs or worms up in the clouds, I suppose. After all, though, if I really were a bird,



I should see the insects in the air, and snap at them most likely as I passed."

"Much better be a toy fairy bird, and do without food," said the Fairy Doll, as higher and higher they flew, to Ethel's great delight—but it seemed so strange that the rods also rose higher and higher with her, although they were not flying.

"Well, this *is* funny," she said at last. "They will become giant birch-rods soon, and when I return to the ground they will be miles and miles too tall to see a little girl like me."

"We always see little girls, however insignificant they may be," said the voice of the Rod.

"I did not say I was insignificant," answered Ethel, tossing her head.

"Who said you did? We all know you have too good an opinion of yourself to tell *that* truth—a little quiet snubbing now and then will do you an infinite deal of good."

"You are very rude, as you always are," said Ethel in an angry tone.

"Don't lose your temper, my dear, it's not becoming—you may want it some other time, and if you lose it *now*, you will have to find it again, or borrow some one else's."

"Oh dear, oh dear! am I never to be without your company?" asked Ethel. "I am really quite tired of you."

"But I am not tired of you: you are such a charming child that I should like to have the pleasure of"—

"Whipping me, I suppose?" asked Ethel.

“Quite so, my dear! What wonderful penetration you have!”

“That is the result of coming to conclusions,” said Ethel.

“And yet, as I told you before,” said the Rod, “you had really better wait until they come to you.”

“If *you* are a conclusion—I would much rather not, thank you,” was the answer.

And then once more she wondered where he hid himself. It seemed so strange, she thought, to be talking to people one could not see.

“Like carrying on a conversation with yourself.”

.

Meantime Ethel and the Fairy were no longer flying, but had alighted on the land of Somewhere, and were now walking down a green lane bordered with sweet-smelling flowers.

“What lovely blossoms!” exclaimed Ethel admiringly. “I *should* like some of those pink bells, or those white violets.”

“I am very sorry, dear child,” said the Fairy, “but you must not have them. They belong to the toys of this

kingdom. If you gathered them they would wither immediately—but if untouched, they always bloom as you see them now.”

“Then certainly I will not gather them,” said Ethel. “It would be a sad pity to see them die.”

“You are a good child now,” said the Rod in a patronising tone as he came from amongst the flowers,—“and as a reward you shall hear some delightful music.”

“Music!” exclaimed Ethel the next moment, as she suddenly heard discordant noises in the distance,—“if *that* is your idea of music in this country, may I beg to be excused listening to it?”

“Who is rude now?” said the Rod. “Have you not learnt the etiquette of polite society?—think what you please, but don’t put your thoughts into words.”

Ethel had no time to answer, for she had to spring to one side, as a procession of trumpets, drums, and babies’ rattles came rapidly onwards and marched past her. They had little feet and hands, and were blowing themselves out most vigorously, as though trying who could make the most noise. Dozens of tin whistles followed—their shrill

tones being even worse than the preceding ones. Ethel held her hands to her ears, saying—

“How dreadful! Spiteful little things! I can see you are making more noise on purpose to annoy me.”

“No such thing. It is want of appreciation on your part,” said the Whistles. “It is our duty to make a noise; we were invented for that purpose.”

That was true enough, and Ethel felt, like the polly, sorry she had spoken!

On they marched, keeping time with their little feet, and they each looked at their human-being visitor as they passed, and said—

“Isn’t it nice?”

“Well,” said Ethel, “I thought it bad enough to hear two organs playing different tunes at the same time, when we were at Brighton last year, but, in *my* opinion, this is worse than all!”

“You have no business to have opinions,” said the Rod sharply. “You are much too young.”

“Do be quiet,” said Ethel; “you are continually correcting me!”

"'Tis my duty!"

"Are you always so particular in doing your duty?"

"Always. At least—where little girls are concerned."

"Ah! I thought so," said Ethel with a triumphant smile.

"I don't suppose you are so particular where yourself is concerned."

And then she followed the Whistles, as she was curious to know where they were going. She soon found herself standing opposite to a "Caravan," in the front of which was a large picture representing a forest with lions and tigers in it.

There were steps to go up, and a door at one side, over which was written "PAY HERE."

"If you have no money," thought Ethel, "what are you to do then?"

As if in answer to her thoughts a placard appeared, "STAY OUTSIDE."

"But that is just what I don't want to do," said Ethel.

"I like wild beast shows. I have seen them at the sea-side."

While she was speaking some creature came through the door, and walked up and down in a restless kind of manner.

Ethel could not be sure if it was a man or a bird! He had a bird's head, with a large beak and bright black eyes, and



was dressed in a long brown ulster, with a cape to it—very comfortable looking altogether, but decidedly queer, Ethel thought. It was just like a bird Artie had had given to him last Christmas—but his was filled with sweets.

Whether this one was also filled with sweets did not appear, but it began now to hop about, as though trying to walk like a man had been too fatiguing, “and,” as Ethel said, “hopping was most natural to a bird.”

It had a large brass trumpet in its hand, with a square flag attached to it—such as Ethel had seen the Royal “beefeaters” represented as carrying. Through this trumpet it shouted—“Walk in, walk in, ladies and gentlemen, the show is just about to commence. Pay your pennies, and walk in.”





CHAPTER V.

TEN LITTLE NIGGERS.



“**HERE** *are* the ladies and gentlemen?” asked Ethel. “I have seen no lady in this country, but myself! and as to gentlemen—*surely* the Rod does not call himself one!”

“Yes! he does, a *real* gentleman!” said the very well-known voice.

“Where *is* that Rod?” she exclaimed, half-laughing in spite of herself.

She turned to look, and was startled to find herself surrounded by hundreds of birds and animals, all in pairs, and free! She had wanted to go into a show well supplied with iron cages, but this was a very different affair.

"Oh, dear me!" she murmured, "what wild country am I in? This must be a regular wild beast forest, and if so, how shall I get away from these dreadful creatures?"

Ethel tried to scream, but her mouth would not open.

"I must feel now," she thought, "as people do when they have the nightmare. It is caused, I believe, through indigestion; but how can I have indigestion, when I have only biscuits and milk for my supper? Oh dear! I wish they would not stare at me—I am sure I shall faint if they come any nearer, although I never did so before in my life; and after all, it won't be any use doing so now, as there is no one here to help me. Indeed, I might be worse off than I am, for if I fainted the animals would eat me, perhaps, for their dinners, and I have no magic ring like Aladdin by which to summon genii to my aid. It is too bad of that fairy to leave me just when I wanted her most. I *must* scream! perhaps she will hear me and come——H—elp!"

The frightened cry was still echoing around when a gentle voice said—

"Why, what is it? Don't be frightened, Ethel, I am here. Did you think I had forsaken you? Poor child, I have not

left your side, though sometimes I am invisible to you. But don't you really recognise the animals?"

"Recognise them? No. They are wild-looking creatures, and I was afraid of their eating me."

"Silly child!" said the Rod contemptuously, "they are the animals out of your brother's Noah's Ark."

"O-h-h!" stammered Ethel, rather ashamed of her cowardice. "But they stared at me in such an angry manner, that was why I was afraid. Where are they going?"

"Well," said the Fairy, "this caravan is a 'show' where the toys and animals go to 'show off' their various accomplishments. They meet together once a week, and imitate the things they have seen done in the children's world; some of them are very clever."

"How nice it must be to see them! I should like to go inside!"

"And so you shall," said the Fairy.

"But how can we manage it, for I have no money," said Ethel, "and it says over the door, '*Pay here*'?"

"And so you have paid, and here we are," said the
D

Fairy. "Wishes are the current coin of the realm in these parts."

Evidently it was so, for Ethel now found herself with the Fairy seated on crimson covered chairs, and as she settled herself comfortably she sighed contentedly—

"After all, this is a wonderfully nice country, if that is the case, and you have only to wish to be anywhere and you are there immediately. How nice it would be if it was the same in my country! I would wish to go to all sorts of places, instead of doing my lessons!"

"And grow up a dunce!" said the voice of the Rod.

"Ah! dear me! why *did you* come? Just when I was going to enjoy myself," said Ethel, as she found the Rod by her side. "I had actually almost forgotten that there was such a disagreeable thing as yourself in existence."

"That is my reason for coming," said the Rod; "I have no wish to be forgotten, and you are sure to behave yourself, when you know a birch rod is hanging over your head."

Saying this, he swung himself backwards and forwards over Ethel's head—his green eyes fixed upon her, and an ugly leer on his face.

“Ah!” said Ethel, looking up at him, “I begin to think it is a good thing, after all, that I don’t have to see you every time you speak, for you don’t improve on acquaintance, I confess.”

“Don’t want to ; familiarity breeds contempt.”

“Ah, well,” said Ethel, “for the future you can say and do as you like ; I shall not take any more notice of you,” and she turned from him to her pleasanter companion.

“This must be a ‘Circus,’” she said to the Fairy, after looking about her a few moments. “It is round, just the same, and there is the ‘ring’ where the horses perform, only this one has no roof to it,” for Ethel could see the sky.

“Whatever it is you must keep very quiet in it,” said the Fairy, “and remember—if you speak *after* the performance begins, something dreadful may happen to you.”

The Rod swayed about at these words and said, “I am here !”

“Hush! hush, both of you,” exclaimed the Fairy, “here they come.”

The doors of the enormous building flew wide open, and all the animals that Ethel had seen outside came marching

in. They ranged themselves round the ring. Carts and horses, dancing niggers, omnibuses, wheelbarrows, and all sorts of toys, followed each other in great order—they seemed to know their own places.

“How well behaved the animals are,” thought Ethel, as she saw a wolf and a lamb standing together. “I need not have been frightened of them. But after all, perhaps the wolf has just had his dinner, and is not hungry.”

Some of the toys bore signs of ill-usage, having lost their wheels or shafts, and the horses their legs. Some of those thus maimed stumped along bravely, whilst others were assisted by their companions.

“There’s one of our nursery horses,” thought Ethel, as a grey horse, with a green leather cushion on its back, came in. It had only two legs, one fore and one hind—but managed to get along because it was on castors.

Ethel wished she could tell the Fairy that she recognised a friend, but as she dared not speak she pointed to the horse, then to herself, and the Fairy nodded her head and said—

“I know.”

When all the animals and toys were arranged the musi

cians came marching in, blowing as hard as ever. They went all round the building, and as they passed Ethel they gave an extra blast, then seated themselves on a raised platform.

Ethel felt distracted with their music, and only for the Fairy's warning would have asked them, "To please make less noise." However, some one else did it for her.

"Silence !" cried the ulster-coated bird with the trumpet, as he strutted in.

"What a welcome word," thought Ethel ; "I shall always like that bird, he evidently thinks the music as great discord as I do."

"Silence ! The first performance on the programme is a 'Bicycle race,' " called the bird through his trumpet.

In the centre of the ring stood two little bicycles, each mounted by a little man dressed in a blue jacket and red trousers. Ethel got quite excited ; she stood up, but the Fairy pulled her back into her seat, and put up her finger, saying—

"Hush ! !"

"One of those bicycles," she said to herself, "belonged to Bertie ; he has been looking for it *everywhere* to put new

elastic to it, and here it is enjoying itself without. I do wish I could speak to it."

Her lips parted, she felt as if she really must do so, but the Fairy pressed her hand just in time as a reminder.

Meantime the men stood looking at each other, but doing nothing else.

"Why don't they run?" thought Ethel.

"Silence!" called the bird.

"How stupid he is, calling 'silence' when no one is speaking," thought Ethel once more.

"Silence! Ladies and gentlemen, as the bicycles are broken, they can't run the race, so *we* must run for them."

Immediately the whole circus went round and round, visitors included. Ethel felt quite giddy.

"Dear me," she thought, "this is just like the 'hobby-horse swings' they have at fairs—where a man stands and says, 'j-ust in time, only one half-penny for a ride on your own hobby horse.' I wish this would stop."

Fortunately at that moment the whole came to a standstill. A clapping noise announced that the race was over—and as neither had run—*both* had won.

“That’s one way of arranging races,” Ethel thought ; “ but it would have been more polite before that whirligig business began had they asked the visitors, ‘ was it agreeable to them ? ’ ”

She had scarcely time for these reflections when the Master of the Ceremonies again called—

“ Silence ! The next performance, ladies and gentlemen, is a nigger dance and song ! ”

“ A song ! ” smiled Ethel to herself. “ It is to be hoped they will sing better than they play.”

Ten little niggers stepped forward, dragging their dancing boards behind them. They arranged them in the centre of the ring, five one way, five the other, so as to form a platform ; they jumped up, shook themselves a little—then stood still.

“ How ugly they are ! ” thought Ethel ; “ so greasy looking, —why can’t they scrub themselves white ! They would still be niggers, of course, with their woolly heads, and flat nose only white niggers. And now I wish they would begin dancing ? every one dawdles so here. Surely the company is not expected to dance for them as it ran for the bicycles ! ”

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"Silence! let the song begin!" said the bird at this moment.

Ethel looked at the Fairy as much as to say, Who is to sing?

"S-i-l-e-n-c-e!" again called the herald! "*Let the song begin,*" and then to Ethel's great bewilderment he hopped up to her, and made her a low bow, and she found that he meant *her* to sing, he appeared to say it to her. She looked at the Fairy! for had she not been told she was not to speak?

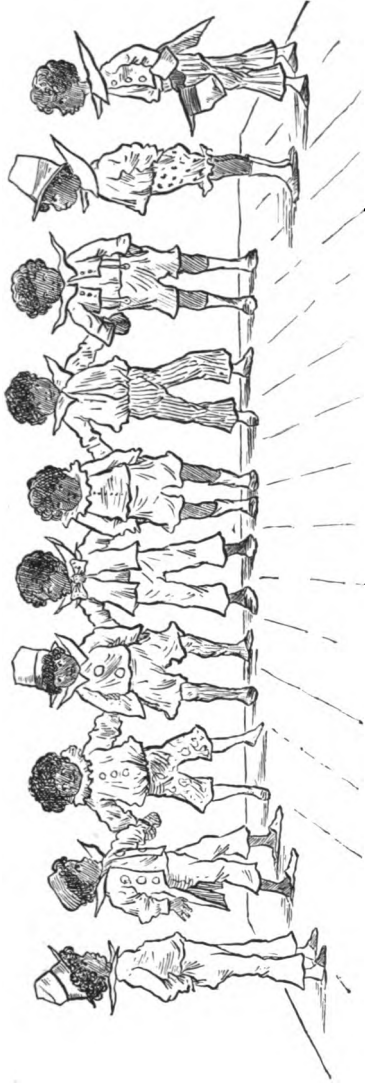
"Singing is not talking," said the Fairy. "The animals wish you to sing, and you must obey them."

"Of course you must. Do as you are bid, Miss, at once," said the Rod; "my eye is upon you!"

Ethel felt rather nervous, as not only the Rod's eye, but all eyes were fixed upon her.

"Stand up," said the Rod, "no one can sing properly when they sit. Hold up your head, throw out your chest, and open your mouth wide enough for the words to come out. You should just hear *me* sing."

"Now, my dear," whispered the Fairy encouragingly, "don't be afraid."



Ethel stood up. She could not help feeling a little afraid, but it was no good to delay any longer. Clearing her throat, she began the well-known popular song—

“Ten little niggers boys went out to dine !
One choked his little self, and then there were *nine*.”

As she sang the niggers danced in a vigorous manner, only pausing at the end of each verse. At the end of the first one the tenth nigger began to choke, the *nine* patted him on the back, but he rolled over—and was gone !

"Nine little nigger boys sat up very late !

One overslept himself, and then there were *eight*."

Loud snores were immediately heard, and a nigger was seen lying on the platform. The eight kicked him, pulled his nose, but still he slept, he gave a grunt, rolled over—and disappeared.

"Eight little nigger boys travelling in Devon !

One said he'd stay there, and then there were *seven*."

They dragged him, coaxed him—but he shook his head, and said "he'd stay."

"Time's up," called the bird through his trumpet, "good-bye, Sam ! good-bye !" and he was gone.

"Seven little nigger boys chopping up sticks !

One chopped himself in halves, and then there were *six*."

Poor little nigger boy, there he lay, cut clean in two ! Ethel could not imagine how he had had the strength to do it !

"Glue him !" said one of the six.

"It's no use," said another ; "he's done for, throw him on one side."

"Six little nigger boys playing with a hive !

A Bumble Bee stung one, and then there were *five*."

“How stupid of them to play with a hive,” thought Ethel—“I hope that Bumble Bee won’t come near me,” and she put up her hand to ward it off.

“O ! Jimbo ! I’sc stung !” wailed the poor little nigger boy.

“Pitch him after number seven,” said the five ; “he’s done for.”

“What heartless creatures they are,” thought Ethel.

“Silence !” shouted the bird again—“let the song proceed.”

Ethel had been so busy with her thoughts that she had forgotten to sing. She went on now in a hurry.

“Five little nigger boys going in for law !
One got in Chancery, and then there were *four*.”

“Silence !” called the bird. “Where’s Chancery ?”

“Wal ! I reckon,” said one of the niggers, “Chancery is Chancery, and if you once get there, my friend, you’ll never get out—so keep ‘a kind o’ clear of it.’ A friend of mine, way down South, got in, all but one leg ! We pulled to get him out, and pulled so hard—for he was kind o’ fast—that his leg came off. It is now exhibited as a specimen of ‘a *limb of the law*.’”

"These niggers must be Americans," thought Ethel, "they speak in such a twangy style." She could not help laughing as she listened to them, but she was quickly called to order by the bird crying—

"Silence! let the song proceed."

"Four little nigger boys going out to sea!

A red herring swallowed one, and then there were *three*."

"Silence! where's the red herring?" asked the bird.

"Please, sir," said one of the three niggers, "the red herring has just sent word that he is suffering from 'Indigestion'—part of the nigger he swallowed last week remains undigested, and he cannot take any more at present."

"Put number four on one side, then," ordered the bird, "until the red herring is ready for him."

"I always thought it was *whales* that swallowed men," said Ethel to herself. "I suppose I was mistaken."

"Three little nigger boys walking in the Zoo!

The big bear hugged one, and then there were *two*."

"Where's the bear? bring him forth," said the bird.

A brown bear came slowly on to the platform.

“Do your duty, sir,” commanded Mr. Ulster-coat.

The bear seemed undecided as to which nigger he should choose—but the poor little doomed nigger boy came forward, and said—

“I’s the victim,”—and immediately the bear began to hug him—and the nigger screamed, “*Not so hard, please,*” while the remaining two looked calmly on and appeared to enjoy the fun.

“How dreadful it is,” thought Ethel, “to be compelled to sit here and watch such barbarity.”

“Two little nigger boys sitting in the sun !

One got frizzled up, and then there was *one*.”

“The sun, the sun,” called the bird, “light up the sun.”

“He is not shining here to-day,” said the *one* nigger, “he is busy elsewhere, and can’t come.”

“Put number two on one side,” was again the order, “until the sun is disengaged.”

“Oh dear me,” said Ethel to herself, “I’m so glad there is only one more verse, I am tired of singing.”

“One little nigger boy living all alone !

He got married, and—then—there——

"The nigger stopped dancing.

"What is the matter?" called the bird.

"Please sir, how can I marry without a wife?"

"Ah! just so, of course he can't," all cried; "find him a wife!"

All eyes were turned to Ethel. The birch-rod swayed over her head in a joyful manner, and said—

"What a nice little wife she'll make!"

Poor Ethel felt very uncomfortable. "They surely don't mean *me* to be his wife!" she thought. "If I only could speak!" She looked round—there was a breathless silence.

"Find him a wife!" cried the whole company once more.

And—to her horror—the bird came up to her, took her hand, and said in a loud voice—

"COME, AND BE THE NIGGER'S WIFE!"

Ethel tried to release her hands.

"COME," he said, and dragged her. Her face grew pale, she gasped for breath.

"I WON'T BE HIS WIFE," she

She had spoken!

The walls of the building disappeared. Her open mouths rushed at her. She knew not where.



“No!”

“Be disobedient again.”

“You will then,” they said, and
“als of fire.”

“they will kill me,” sobbed Ethel.

“All went, the animals following.”

There was a crashing sound—the walls of the building disappeared, and the animals with open mouths rushed at her.

“Disobedient girl,” they roared.

Ethel backed and backed, she knew not where.



“Come and be the nigger's wife !”

“Do forgive me ! I will never be disobedient again.”

“Not till next time, but you will then,” they said, and their eyes gleamed like coals of fire.

“What shall I do ? they will kill me,” sobbed Ethel.

Backwards she still went, the animals following.

"I must keep *my* eyes on theirs," she suddenly thought, "that is the way the hunters do, I think papa told me."

But she found it very hard to keep her eyes steadily on these fierce ones, while their owners still hissed out—

"Disobedient girl, disobedient girl!"


She had backed almost to the wall, when she caught her foot on a nail, tripped and fell!—on what? the BIRCH-ROD!





CHAPTER VI.

THE GATES OF THE DOLL COUNTRY.

“LUMSY girl!” said the Rod, “where are you going to?”

“I don’t know,” said Ethel, looking carefully around. And she gave a sigh of relief when she found the animals were nowhere to be seen.

“Next time you fall,” said the Rod, “and don’t *know* where you are going, be kind enough to *look*,” and he stood up and shook himself. “I *might* have been killed! and what a loss I should have been! don’t you think so?” and he rolled his eyes about, with a grin on his mouth.

“Why do you ask me such ridiculous questions?” said Ethel; “you *know* I don’t think so!”

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"Well! I must say something, and as I am speaking to *you*, it does not signify whether it is ridiculous or not," answered the Rod.

"You are as rude as usual, I am sorry to find," said Ethel. "If you had been brought up in a gentlemanly manner, you would know how to treat a young lady!"

"Young lady! he! he! a bit of a girl, you mean!" And he commenced dancing in front of Ethel. "Besides—*I* never was brought up—*my* business is to bring up little girls properly."

Ethel began to look very angry, when the Fairy said cheerfully—

"Don't mind him, he enjoys teasing you, and the more you show you care about it, the worse he does it. Cheer up and come with me."

"Most willingly," said Ethel. "I thought I had lost you or that the animals had devoured you."

"Did you?" laughed the Fairy merrily, as she led Ethel through a beautiful field. "No, no, I am not so easily lost or devoured, I can tell you."

"I am sure I am glad you are not," said Ethel, "for I

don't know what I should do without you. But oh ! what lovely green grass you have brought me to now, and what pretty daisies and buttercups. They look like silver and gold ; the grass in my country is not half so bright as this, but then we let the cows and sheep feed in our fields, and they spoil it, and tread down all the daisies."

While she spoke she put up her hand for a moment to shield her eyes from the glittering flowers, and when she looked round again she cried, " But where am I now, please, dear Fairy ? "

There were no longer any flowers to be seen, but the sun was shining so brightly that she still could not raise her eyes. She put up her hand again and shaded them, and saw that she was standing in front of a large gate. This gate was painted red and gold, it was the strong reflection of the gold with the sun on it that had dazzled Ethel's eyes so much.

" How gorgeous ! " she murmured. " I wonder if I dare open it, and peep where it leads to ? "

" You can't," said the Fairy.

" Why ? "

"Because it is locked."

"How provoking! I should think there must be such a lovely place inside."

"And you think quite right," said the Fairy. "Can you guess what it is?"

"No, indeed, I asked you to tell me."

"Ah! to be sure, so you did. Well, look up and see what it says at the top of the gate."

Ethel looked up quickly enough when thus bidden, in spite of the dazzling light, and saw printed in large letters of blue and silver, "THE DOLL COUNTRY."

"I am actually here at last." Then she gave a prodigious sigh of thankfulness. "How glad I am. Do, please, open the gate, and let me get in."

"I am very sorry, but I can't," said the Fairy.

"No, she can't, but *I can*," said a voice.

And Ethel saw the birch-rod sitting on the top of the gate.

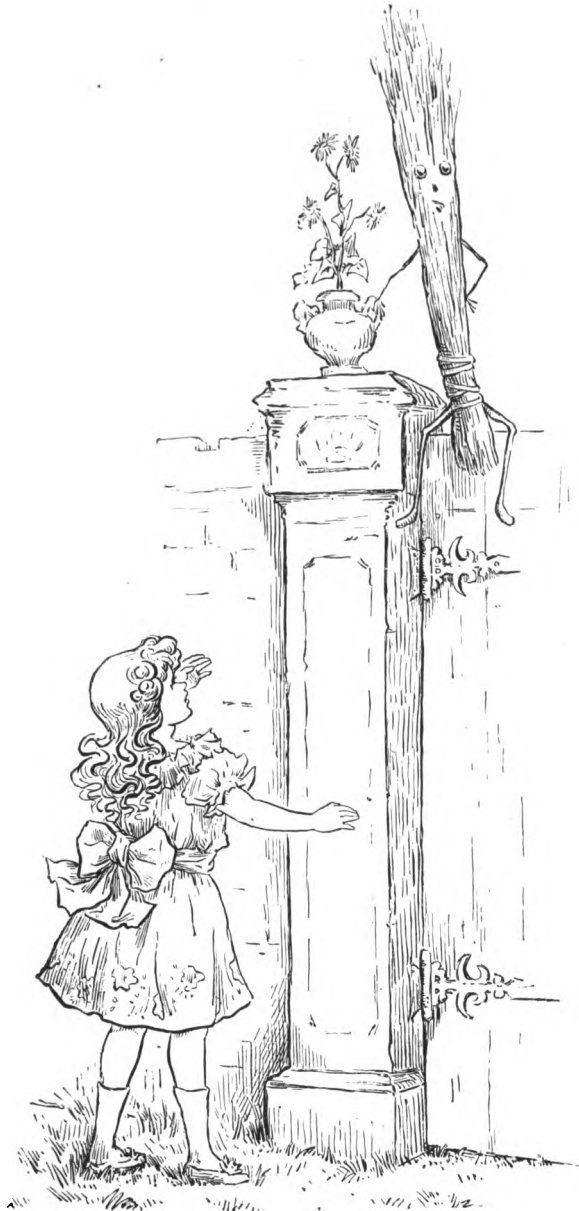
"*You?*" said Ethel,—"*what have you to do with it?*"

"Everything!" he answered, "considering that I keep the key!"

“Why do you sit there, then? I suppose the lock is not on the top of the gate!”

“No, my dear, it is not, but I am one of the ornaments, don't you see? Ornamental as well as useful!” and he gave a little chuckle.

“It is a good thing you are something, at any rate,” said Ethel. “You



are certainly not very polite, or you would come down and open the gate when you hear how much I wish to get in."

"Had you not better practise politeness yourself, before demanding it from others? Remember, you are asking a favour. If you will say '*Please*,' I will oblige you."

"Oh! you tiresome thing," said Ethel—"P-L-EASE—then—there!"

"Say it quicker," called the Rod.

"Why should I say *please* twice for one favour?"

"Because I wish you to do so."

"You are taking advantage of me," said Ethel, "because you know I am longing to see the Doll Country!"

"Do as you like," he answered, "but until you say '*Please*' properly, I shall sit where I am," and he began to sing—

"Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the" —

"For goodness sake, stop your '*diddle, diddle*,'" said Ethel in an impatient tone.

"Pardon me for interrupting you, you might have said," said the Rod, "but—is that French, German, or Italian?"

“What do you mean?” asked Ethel.

“Double Dutch, then, eh?” said the Rod.

“I don’t understand you,” said Ethel. “What’s double Dutch or Italian?”

“I *only* asked for information. I thought perhaps you were saying *please* just now in some foreign tongue when you interrupted me, and I did not recognise the language—that is all!”

He resumed—

“The cow jumped over the moon!

The little dog laughed to see such ——

“I don’t want to know what the *cow* did or the *dog* either,” interrupted Ethel again.

“Did—you—speak?” asked the Rod.

“The dish ran away with—the”——

“You *are* disagreeable,” said Ethel, “your song very much annoys me!”

“I’ll try something else, then.”

“Who—killed—Cock Robin?

I—said—the spar”——

"Say *please* to him," whispered the Fairy, "or he will keep us all day."

"P—p—please—there, will that do?"

"Nicely, my little dear," chuckled the Rod, and down he jumped, and after fumbling for a long time in his pocket (Ethel could not see where his pocket could be), he produced a large golden key.

Ethel clapped her hands, and stood close to him.

"Are you in a hurry?" he asked, "because I am not, and I like little girls to practise patience."

"Oh! *do* be quick," she implored, clasping her hands.

"Will you obey me for the future?" he asked.


"Yes, yes! I will promise *anything* you like, *please* be quick."

The Rod grinned and chuckled, and putting the key in the lock—THE GATES FLEW OPEN.



CHAPTER VII.

THE INVITED GUESTS.

“OW lovely!” exclaimed Ethel as she passed through the gates, and saw a long avenue, the sides of which were composed of roses, violets, honeysuckles, and other beautiful flowers—behind the flowers, on each side, grew tall slender trees, their graceful boughs met overhead, and entwining themselves formed a natural archway—miles long, it appeared to Ethel.

Hundreds of birds were singing—they hovered about her and seemed to say “Welcome.”

“This is charming,” said Ethel, as she walked about, putting her face amongst the flowers. “Their perfume almost takes away my breath. I always imagined the Doll Country

to be a lovely place, but *this* is more than lovely! I could live here for ever. May I gather some of the flowers?"

"They would be useless to you," answered the Fairy, "because they, like the flowers in the Toy Kingdom, would wither immediately."

"How tiresome!" said Ethel in a pettish tone; "what use are they, unless you can gather them? I always pluck *my* flowers as soon as they are in bloom."

"We are more considerate," said the Fairy. "When our flowers have had the trouble of growing, we let them enjoy themselves by blooming as long as they can. If you lived here I fear we should soon have none left, and that would not do—as the Doll Country prides itself on its perpetual beauty."

"But don't you think I might have just one little bud?" persisted Ethel, "this pretty red one, it smells so beautifully."

"Visitors are politely requested not to touch," said the Rod, as he strutted pompously towards her. "Use your eyes, my little dear, and not your fingers."

"I am using my *nose* at present," answered Ethel; "you do not generally smell flowers with your eyes, do you?"

“But you look at them with your eyes, I suppose,” said the Rod. “However,” he added, “as I do not consider either your nose or your eyes of any importance, we will not discuss that subject further.”

“Why do you persist in being so rude to me?” asked Ethel; “I shall certainly not care to come here again.”



“You have not been asked to do so,” said the Rod. “Also remember, that even now you are an *uninvited* guest, and consequently, the less you say the more you’ll shine perhaps.”

"Very well, I shall not argue the point with you ; I can plainly see that you are determined to have the last word, and you are very welcome for all I care."

"There's a good little girl," said the Rod patronisingly. "Little girls should always be submissive to their superiors."

"Superiors, indeed !" cried Ethel, forgetting her determination not to argue with her tormentor ; "where are they in this country, I should like to know ?"

"Behold one in me," was the sharp answer, as he walked back to the gate with a chuckle—while beautiful bells commenced ringing, and Ethel forgot her vexation, and stood still to listen.

"Those are fairy bells," said her fairy doll companion.

"Make way for the invited guests," called the Rod at the same moment.

"Who are they ?" asked Ethel.

"Wait a little while and you will see. Our Queen gives a garden party to-day, and all the dolls that can attend will do so."

"Do they receive invitations ? I always like written ones,

I don't consider them proper parties that one is asked to without nice little notes."

"They do not exactly *receive* invitations," said the Fairy. "But they all know that they are expected to come if possible."

"Then *why* don't they receive invitations?"

"Because Y is not Z," called the Rod.

"I was not speaking to *you*," said Ethel in a haughty tone. "Speak when you are spoken to."

"As little girls ought to do," he replied.

But Ethel did not hear, she was listening to the bells again.

"How nice they sound!" she said. "They seem to say 'Wel-come.'"

Louder they pealed and louder, then suddenly ceased as the Rod, with the air of a lord, threw open the gates, and said in loud tones—"Welcome—*invited* guests!"

"What a lot of dolls!" exclaimed Ethel, as she and the Fairy stood behind a tree; "are they all coming here? I should think the Doll Country will scarcely hold them! There's my Robinson Crusoe, and Alice is walking by the side of the goat. I thought you had no animals in this

country? I thought they had to stay in the Toy Kingdom?"

"Your Crusoe is privileged," said the Fairy. "He is a favourite of our Queen's, on account of the perils and hardships he has endured; and as he cannot walk the goat always carries him. Of course our Queen does not know of his latest accident. I am afraid she will be very angry when she is told about it."

Hundreds and thousands of dolls, it seemed to Ethel, were now at the gates; they all walked through smiling, and bowed to the Rod as they passed.

"See how polite *they* are to him," said the Fairy, "he is their guardian, you know."

"I'm glad he is not mine," said Ethel.

The Rod heard her, and wriggled about as though whipping some one.

Tall stately dolls, china dolls, rag dolls, common wooden dolls, gutta percha dolls, and little fairy dolls went past; some were elegantly dressed in silks and satins, some were untidy and dilapidated—some without arms, or hair, and some without eyes—these were led by their companions

—others had bandages round their heads to keep them together.

“Just fancy those wretched objects going to a garden party!” said Ethel.

“We have no distinction in this country,” said the Fairy.



“There’s my Princess Trebizonde,” exclaimed Ethel as a haughty doll, gorgeously dressed in crimson satin, walked past her. “How *did* she get out of the wardrobe drawer? I will ask her!”

"No, indeed. Hush!" said the Fairy. "You must not speak to her. Now remember what I am going to tell you—whatever you see and hear, you *must be silent*. You can speak to me, *but not to the dolls*. If you do, I can't answer for the consequences, I shall be powerless to protect you. You disregarded my warning in the Toy Kingdom, and only for the timely aid of the Rod you would have been devoured by the animals."

"*The Rod*," said Ethel.

"Yes! me!" he said, and he turned his green eyes sideways to look at her. "I have been very kind to you, Miss, I can tell you, since you have been here, whatever you may think."

"He will not protect you again, though," continued the Fairy; "in fact, he will be the one to punish you."

"Shan't I like it?" and he smacked his lips. "Never forget, my dear, that little girls ought to be seen, but not heard."

"All right," said Ethel. "But look, there's my Bo-peep, and my Sailor doll, and my French peasant, and there's cousin Mabel's Red Riding Hood," as a pretty doll, dressed in

a blue frock, white pinafore, and scarlet satin cloak, went past. "And there's my baby Cyril. Well, I never! I would not have him to sleep with me, so he has come here.

"There's 'Lady Flora' coming in now, cousin Flora's last new doll, in her blue silk dinner dress—and the skirt all trailing on the ground! Why does she not hold it up?"

"Because she likes it sweeping the ground better," said the Fairy, "and she can do as she likes in the Doll Country."

"So it seems," muttered Ethel, adding aloud—

"There's 'Lady Maud!' she looks taller than ever, far too big for this country."

"She cannot help her height," said the Fairy.

At that moment a new thought struck Ethel, and she asked eagerly—

"Shall I see *all* the dolls that are in the Doll Country?"

"Yes! I think you will—why?"

"Because I am anxious to know if my missing doll is here. I have lost her, poor thing."

"And why do you think she may have run here?" asked the Fairy.

"It is rather a long story," answered Ethel. "I had a

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lovely doll, that could say 'Pa-Pa'—'Ma-Ma.' I was very fond of her for about two years—then she got old and faded, and my mother bought me a new one, which I called the lady doll, she was so grand. After that I neglected my 'Pa and Ma' doll, and she tried to run away. One of the servants caught her at the hall-door, and brought her to me. *I boxed her ears*—my brothers tried her by court-martial, and altogether we treated her very badly, and in a day or two she disappeared. That is a week ago—we have searched everywhere for her, but cannot find her—so my mother thinks she *must* have gone to the Doll Country."

"Very likely," said the Fairy gravely. "Very likely, I should think."

"Then I hope I shall find her, and be able to insist upon her returning with me," said Ethel.

"Would you ill-use her again?" asked the Fairy.

"I should certainly punish her, for causing me so much trouble—and—then I would forgive her,—at least, I think I would. I used to love her so much! I shall never love another doll as I did her.

"The lady doll has disappeared also, but I don't care

about finding her—I never liked her much ; she was very handsome, but independent looking. But the ‘Pa and Ma’ doll had such a sweet face !”

There had been a short pause in the arrival of the visitors while Ethel was speaking, but now a new troop arrived, and she cried—

“Oh, dear me, there are my old nursery dolls coming now ! Well, you *are* dilapidated-looking, my dears ; you ought not to be admitted.”

“All are welcome,” said the Fairy.

“So it seems, and that nasty Rod is making quite a fuss over them ; it is because I am here, I suppose.”

“*Poor* dolly !” he said to one that had her head bandaged up to hide an ugly crack, and the loss of one eye, “you *have* been ill used, my dear. Your mistress ought to be ashamed of herself—how I should enjoy punishing her !” and he kicked up his heels. “Perhaps I may yet have the pleasure, who knows ?”

“I shall just whip those disagreeable dolls to-morrow,” muttered Ethel, “for coming here—showing off their forlorn condition—to excite pity, I suppose.”

“Cruel girl!” said the Rod. “How would you like to be whipped because some one had broken your nose, and you tried to forget your troubles by going out and enjoying yourself a little?”

“Not at all,” said Ethel; “that would be, as my papa says, adding insult to injury—but then, *I* am not a doll!”

“Do unto others as you would be done by,” said the Rod.

“How he preaches!” said Ethel; “he tries to make himself out such a just and righteous thing, and yet he is most spitefully anxious to hurt me.”


“Never mind about all that, let us follow the dolls,” said the Fairy quickly, as the birch rod now closed the gates, and they went down the avenue of flowers hand in hand.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUEEN'S PALACE.

“HIS is nice,” said Ethel, “to be really in the Doll Country! what a great deal I shall have to tell my cousins. Florry believes that there is a Doll Country, but that no mortal can find it. *I* am mortal, and I have found it!”

“You must remember that *I* brought you,” said the Fairy—“and fairies can do anything they like.”

“How nice,” said Ethel. “I wish I were a fairy. But really I am very much obliged to you for bringing me here. I am pleased with everything I have seen—except—the birch rod.”

“Ahem! I am here! beware what you say,” called a voice.

And there he was, walking behind Ethel with the gold key fastened to his side.

"Why don't you stay at the gates?" she asked.

"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no stories."

"You might answer one in a more civil manner."

"Well, because I don't—that's why. Will that suit your ladyship?"

"If you mean as an answer, I don't think it is much better than the last," said Ethel, turning back to look at the dolls, who walked on, laughing and talking to each other, evidently enjoying themselves. Some skipped about, stopping now and then to smell the flowers.

"Some of the dolls have not been here before," explained the Fairy, accounting for their pleasure, "and all is new to them. How delighted they seem, don't they?"

Ethel had hardly breath to answer the question, so great was her own delight. As she moved on, the avenue of flowers became wider—the branches parted gracefully overhead, showing the lovely blue sky and the bright sun. Hundreds of humming-birds flew about, and the air seemed laden with the scent of the flowers.

The dolls must have walked quicker than Ethel—at any rate, they had disappeared when she at last emerged from the floral avenue into the open country, and suddenly came in sight of pretty little houses standing here and there in their trim gardens.

“I did not see those houses before,” she said to the Fairy, “not even their chimney-pots.”

“You were so entranced with the flowers and birds, that of course you did not perceive how the avenue was gradually opening into this little village.”

“But where are the dolls? Are these their homes when they come here, and have they gone in to them?” asked Ethel.

“Some of the little ones live in these houses sometimes,” was the answer, “but just now they have all gone on to the Queen's Palace. See,—there they are in the distance.”

“Ah! so they are,” said Ethel. “But do look here. I'm sure this is my doll's house.”

And she stood still before a “model villa.” It was painted to represent bricks,—had a sloping slate roof, and two chimneys. On the window sills were little pots of

flowers, and it had a little garden of its own, with flower beds, and a white gate.

“It *is* mine! there is the ticket ‘To Let’ in the window. The last time I played with it I put that ticket there—the doll mistress was broken—so the house was ‘to let’—that is weeks ago.”

“You had better look through one of the windows,” said the Fairy.

Ethel did so—she was obliged to kneel down, to see properly.

Yes! it certainly was her house—all topsy turvy—chairs, tables, pans, and tea-cups scattered on the kitchen floor.

“How untidy it looks,” she thought with shame.

The drawing-room and bedroom were just in the same upset state; the cook and housemaid—two pretty dolls dressed in cotton frocks and bib aprons—were sitting on the drawing-room couch.

“There’s impudence,” muttered Ethel. “How *dare* they sit on that crimson silk couch? I wish I could speak to them. Only wait until to-morrow, though, and I will teach you your place, you impudent dolls!”

But hark ! they were speaking to each other.

“ Shall we tidy the house up a bit ? ” said one of the dolls at last to her companion.

“ No, indeed. What is the use of exerting ourselves ? ” said the other ; “ we should get no thanks for it.”



“ Ah ! you are right there. I don't suppose we should. Our mistress rarely attends to her house now—the novelty has worn off. She is a dreadful child for new toys.”

“ Well, that ought not to trouble us, at any rate,” laughed Cook, “ we shall live the longer—the house is ‘ to let ’ now.

I wish some nice little girl would take it, one that would look after us."

"Ah! well!" said the housemaid, yawning, "never mind the house! let's go to the garden party, instead of worrying our heads about it any more."

Thereupon they both got up laughing and singing, and in a minute they were to be seen going through the garden gate, and running down the road.

"This is certainly very pleasant," said Ethel, "to hear yourself talked about by those bits of dolls."

"It should be a good lesson to you," said the Fairy gravely; "you hear what they think of you, there must be some cause for it!"

"Cause or no cause, it is very presuming of them to speak of me as a 'dreadful and destructive *child*,'" was the parting answer.

"*So you are!*" cried a voice close by.

"Who's that?" she exclaimed, starting.

"*Only me!*"

And there was the Rod leaning, in an attitude somewhat stiff but restful, against the side of the house.

“Where did *you* spring from?” asked Ethel in fresh surprise.

“From nowhere! I have followed you. See how fond I am of you! can’t bear to be out of your sight a minute! come to my arms,” and he extended his arms towards her.

Ethel sprang backwards, and the Fairy, laughing, said—

“Come then, let us run away, if you would rather.”

And she took hold of Ethel’s hand and away they went, the Rod, however, following—in fact, he appeared to be driving them, for he kept saying Shoo! shoo! which sounded so utterly ridiculous that Ethel could hardly run for laughing.

They suddenly turned a corner, and Ethel found herself standing at the entrance of a garden—such a garden! it must be veritable fairyland, she thought!

She stood entranced—“Talk about the Isle of Wight,” she exclaimed, “and the gardens at Hampton Court! I never saw anything that could equal this garden in grandeur at either of those places.”

The scene really was most magnificent! The flower-beds were of most gorgeous colours, arranged in artistic patterns,

—lovely trees hung with gold and silver fruit shaded it from the hot sun, and under the trees were glittering garden seats of mother-of-pearl and coral. In all the shady nooks stood white marble fountains—their scented waters thrown in the air like crystal balls of many hues,—sometimes the water formed rainbows, at others sparkling cascades,—whilst little silver bells were hung round the basins, and as the water touched them, they rang in silvery chimes.

On one side of the garden stood a little palace. The walls were of burnished gold, the windows of coloured glass, the door of pink coral, and the steps of white marble. In the front of the palace, a little distance from the steps, was a golden chair, on a raised dais, covered with pale blue satin embroidered in gold and silver thread, with seed pearls interwoven.

“Who is the throne for?” whispered Ethel.

“For our Queen,” answered the Fairy, “and that is her palace.”

“The Queen of the Doll Country’s Palace!” said Ethel.

“How lovely it is! what a happy Queen she must be to own

such a place—and to have these charming grounds for her very own. I suppose she never visits the children's world?"

"No! never," said the Fairy. "She does not leave her own country, whoever wishes to see her must come here."

"May I go into the garden?"

"Oh dear no!" said the Fairy. "No mortal is allowed within the precincts of the royal palace."

"Then I wish I was a"——

"Birch-rod, for instance, eh?" said a voice on the other side of her.

"Now just go away, please do, just for a little while," begged Ethel, "or you will spoil my pleasure."

"On the contrary, my dear, I intend to add to the enjoyment of it. Something within my bones"——

"I did not know you had any," interrupted Ethel.

"Don't interrupt—it's rude," said the Rod. "Something within my——my twigs, boughs, branches, or whatever you like to call them then, tells me that I shall have the pleasure of contributing largely to your amusement, before your visit is over."

Saying which he grinned and chuckled, and then added
“And also”——

“Come with me,” whispered the Fairy; “don’t stand listening to his teasing tongue any longer.”

So saying, she led Ethel up some broad steps covered with crimson carpet, with flower-pots of lovely flowers on each step,—and through a doorway hung with lace curtains.

Ethel now saw that she was in a large and handsome building evidently intended for a spectacle of some sort. The interior was adorned with numerous fine mirrors, and there were several rows of handsome chairs covered with crimson velvet placed all round for the spectators.

Ethel went to the front of the seats, and, to her surprise, saw the royal garden below.

“How delightful!” she exclaimed: “I can sit down comfortably here, and see all that is going on. But I really must not speak this time!”

“Take your seats, please, ladies,” said the Rod, at this moment, in a pompous tone, putting a stop to Ethel’s meditations. He had put on a large white cravat, with a



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THE ROYAL GARDEN PARTY.—Page 94.

gold coat-of-arms representing two dolls dancing, in the centre of each end.

"Front seats, or sides?" he asked the two ladies.

"Front ones, certainly," said Ethel.

"Tha-a-a-ank you," said the Rod, with a mocking bow.

"If you had not had the good luck to say that, it would have been my duty to have turned you out."

"Which you would not have liked, I suppose?"

"Oh!—dear—no!—not at all," and he winked at her.

"Rude thing!" said Ethel. "It's vulgar to wink."

"Look, look!" said the Fairy, as usual trying to stop the bickering. "There are the guests."

"*Invited* ones! remember," said the Rod.

And looking in the direction indicated, Ethel now saw from under the trees the dolls walking onwards in twos and threes, some lingering now and again by the fountains, others by the flower-beds—all were laughing and talking.

Ethel leaned over with longing eyes.

"Oh! that I might be a doll for *one* night! Just to be down there! How lovely it must be!"

"They require something like this now and then," said

the Fairy, "or they could not bear the treatment they are compelled to endure in the children's world."

The cook and housemaid from the dolls' house came tripping along, giggling and laughing in rather a vulgar way, Ethel thought.

"I am surprised at their being admitted," she said to the Fairy.


"I told you before that we *have no distinctions*; they have not had the advantages that the other dolls have had, so we expect less of them, that is all. Besides, their fun is quite harmless, it is *their* way of enjoying themselves."

They both went up to Robinson Crusoe, but Alice darted a look at them from under her hood, and off they ran. Alice considered that Crusoe belonged to her, and did not approve of the freedom of these two dolls, apparently, much more than did Ethel herself.



CHAPTER IX.

THE GARDEN PARTY.

“ HERE is the Queen?” asked Ethel.

“Watch the palace door,” was the answer. “The Queen’s household will come first.”

Just as she spoke the door flew open, and a great number of little dolls, both ladies and gentlemen, dressed in all shades of satin, came down the steps. The ladies’ dresses were sweeping the ground in grand style, the gentlemen wore cloaks thrown loosely over one shoulder, and looked to Ethel like the cavaliers of olden times, as represented chiefly on twelfth-cakes. When they were all out, they mingled with the other guests.

The cook and housemaid had taken possession of Ethel’s

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sailor doll, and the three were promenading together—the sailor was “heart-whole,” and liked the attention paid to him by his pretty companions.

All the dolls seemed pleased at meeting again, and many questions were asked of each other, such as—

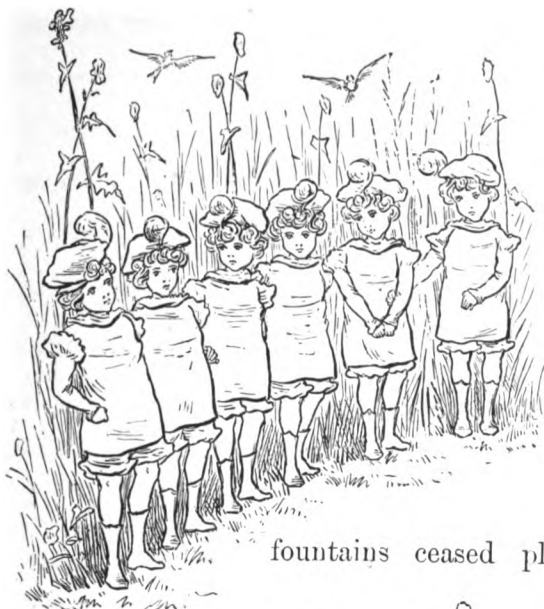
“Do you like your new mistress? Has she any brothers? Do you go into society? Have you many smart dresses?” &c., &c.

Frequently Ethel heard the sentences, “I never thought I should be so ill used! I wish I had not left this country!” “So glad to escape!” “Rest content where you are, my dear!” and many similar expressions.

“Some of those complaints are from *my* dolls,” she said to the Fairy.

“So I expect,” said the Fairy. “But watch the door, Ethel, the Queen will be coming out presently.”

As she spoke six tiny cupids, with garlands of flowers round them and golden trumpets in their hands, came from the palace and stood at the foot of the throne. Then followed six little dolls dressed as pages, in crimson and gold tunics; they came out backwards, and with bowed



heads. The cupids blew the golden trumpets, and cried—

“Hail to our Queen!”

There was instantaneous silence, the birds stopped their songs, and the fountains ceased playing. Then, as

though recovering from their wonder and admiration, the birds sang louder than before, and



Some of the Queen's Attendants.

the water played higher, until the tops of the fountains could scarcely be seen.

A regal-looking doll came with stately mien down the palace steps; her dress was white and shimmering, she was a blaze of jewels. A dazzling crown rested on her little head, her golden hair rippled over her like a mantle, and in her hand she held a golden sceptre. Her train was carried by six dolls also dressed as pages, in pale blue satin and silver tunics.

"So *that* is the Queen of the Doll Country!" sighed Ethel with great contentment. "And I have really seen her at last! How lovely she is—almost too lovely to look at! how can I thank you enough for bringing me here?" And she turned a grateful face to her companion.

"By being obedient," said the Fairy gently. "Remember—you *must not* speak to the dolls!"

"And remember," said the Rod, "*I* am here!—re-e-e-member me!"

"Never fear," laughed Ethel. "If I *do* forget you, it won't be for want of '*re—e—e—member me!*' You have said it often enough."

"I thought your memory was bad, my dear, and I only wished to brush it up for you," muttered the Rod in a hurried aside as the Queen, preceded by her pages, walked



to the throne, where her attendants stood on each side as she mounted and took her seat. The six train-bearers

arranged her train, and then stood with the other pages—six on each side.

All the guests came forward and made their obeisance to her. She welcomed them very graciously, especially Ethel's old nursery dolls.

"What is that bandage for?" the Queen asked, in a tone of sympathy, as one of those poor old dolls stood before her.

"My head is cracked, your majesty, and I have lost one eye," was the doleful answer.

"Poor little creature! And who has done this to you?"

"My mistress, your majesty."

"We must send our prime minister to inquire into this dreadful treatment," said the sovereign sternly. "Where is he?"

"Here, your majesty! behold your devoted servant," said the Rod, as he prostrated himself at the foot of the throne.

"My lord! we command you to make inquiries, and discover the child who treats our subjects in this way."

"With *pleasure*, your majesty," replied this queer prime minister; and he cast his green eyes up at Ethel.

"I hope he will stay down there," murmured that young

lady to the Fairy anxiously. "I have such an uncomfortable sort of a feeling when he is by my side."

Meantime the lynx-eyed object of her terror continued—

"So please your majesty, has your majesty any further commands for me?"

"Not at present, my lord, but remain by our throne," was the grave answer.

Whereupon the Rod made a low bow, and strutted in an important manner to one side of the throne. He then pulled his white cravat until the ends were out a long way on either side of him—shook his head at Ethel, and stood like a sentinel with his hands by his side.

"He only requires a gun," she thought, "to make him look like a soldier; he thinks a great deal of himself, I'm sure, there is such a self-satisfied look on his ugly face."

While she was thus thinking, one of the cupids stepped forward, and after making a low bow to the Queen, announced that the guests were assembled.

The lady guests seated themselves on the garden seats, and the gentlemen stood behind them.

"What is going to happen?" asked Ethel.

"Many of the dolls prepare amusements for the occasion. Some of the nursery rhymes are to be enacted this time," said the Fairy.

She had scarcely given this information when Ethel's doll, Bo-Peep, came tripping along the garden to lead off the performances. She curtsied to the Queen, and then ran up



and down, wringing her hands, and appeared to be looking for her sheep.

The guests sang, and the fountain bells accompanied them—

"Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep,
And cannot tell where to find them!

Leave them alone, and they'll come home,
And bring their tails behind them."

"How funny!" whispered Ethel to the Fairy. "It seems just as if the nursery rhymes had come to life. How pretty it is!"

"Hush," whispered back the Fairy, "here come more of them."

As she spoke two little dolls, dressed in quaint costumes as Jack and Jill, came forward carrying a pail between them. They curtsied to the Queen, and ran merrily on—tripped—and fell.

The guests sang as before—

"Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water ;
Jack fell down, and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after."

Little Jack then got up, assisted Jill, and away they ran, apparently not much the worse for the tumble.

"Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner,
Eating a Christmas pie ;

He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum !
And said—What a good boy am I !”

As the guests sang a pretty boy doll, with a large pie tucked under his arm, came running to the Queen—he made a bow, and ran on.



“I often wonder what that rhyme means !” said Ethel. “Why was he a good boy ? Had the plum no business to be there ? Christmas pies mean mince pies, I suppose, and mince pies have plums in them—chopped ones—ah ! I see now what it must have been. He must have found a whole plum, and thought himself very clever not to get cheated with it, silly little fellow.”

“Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow ?
Silver bells, and cockle shells,
And marigolds ”——

“So please your majesty,” interrupted the Rod, “‘Mary, Mary, quite contrary’ is locked up in the ‘Children’s World,’ and could not be present according to your majesty’s wish.”

“We are sorry,” said the Queen. “However, since it



cannot be helped, let us go on to the next portion of the programme.”

In obedience to the command, a little boy doll, dressed

in blue, came along, blowing a tiny horn in a vigorous manner. The guests immediately sang—

“Little boy blue, come blow us your horn,
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.”

He *did* blow it ; and Ethel thought him a noisy little fellow, but the guests evidently enjoyed it, for they applauded him greatly. He then danced a jig, bowed, and ran away.

The cook belonging to Ethel's doll's house now stepped forward, and after bowing to the Queen began—

“Little Polly Flinders
Sat among the cinders,
Warming her pretty little toes !
Her mother came and caught her,
And whipped her little daughter,
For spoiling her nice new clothes.”

“Well done !” cried the guests, “you are very clever, cooky dear.”

Hereupon the housemaid instantly started up, and in an excited tone said—

“Please your majesty, I can sing too, quite as well as that !”

The guests were much amused. Ethel laughed, and wondered what the Queen would say. She was soon satisfied.

"We shall be pleased to hear you," was the reply, and the Queen smiled graciously.

The doll waited no longer, but jumped on a garden seat, and began—

"I had a little husband, no bigger than my thumb !
I put him in a pint pot, and there I bid him drum ;
"I bought him a little horse, that galloped up and down—
I saddled him, and bridled him, and sent him out of town.
"I gave him some garters, to garter up his hose,
And a little pocket-handkerchief, to wipe his little nose."

"Clever, very clever," all cried ; "what a memory she has !"

The housemaid smiled joyfully at the compliment, jumped down again, kissed her hand to the company, and joined her companions—upon which Lady Maud stood up, and bowing to the Queen, said—

"So please your majesty, I have prepared a little rhyme ; it is not very new, but with your majesty's permission I will sing it."

"Our royal permission is given," said the Queen.

"Pro-ceed," proclaimed the Rod, and accordingly Lady Maud proceeded—

"There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,
She had so many children she didn't know what to do ;
She gave them some broth, without any bread,
And whipped them all soundly, and sent them to bed."

"That's all, your majesty," said Lady Maud, and she curtsayed and retired, while Ethel muttered scornfully—

"The idea of a great big creature, like her, singing such a simple rhyme."

"She did her best," said the Fairy, "no one can do more. But see, your friend is coming to the front now."

"My friend, indeed!" laughed Ethel, as the birch rod strutted forth, and bowing before the throne, said—

"So please your majesty, the humblest of your subjects wishes to contribute to your majesty's amusements. Once before," and here he looked up at Ethel, "I attempted to sing an old, but favourite rhyme, but it was rudely interrupted. To convince *that person* that I *can* sing, may I have your gracious permission to do so now?"

"Certainly, my lord! we shall be delighted to hear the melodious voice of our most useful subject," said the Queen, with a bow full of amiable condescension. Whereupon the Rod shook himself, arranged his cravat, and began—

"Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the guests, "the best song that has yet been sung. Encore! encore."

The Rod bowed, almost cut itself in two with grinning, and retired, winking at Ethel as much as to say—



“There ! what do you think of me *now* ? ”

“Horrid, conceited thing ! ” murmured Ethel ; “ I should like to throw him over the moon, to get rid of him.”

Robinson Crusoe and Alice next came forward, and bowed to the Queen.

"Welcome, Crusoe! hero of the desert island," said the Queen; "but why do you ride your goat?"

"Alas! your majesty, my leg is broken!"

"Broken," said the Queen in a surprised and angry tone.

"My lord," she said, turning to the Rod, "inquire into this matter also. I *will not* have my subjects thus shamefully treated; see to it."

"With pleasure, your majesty," and he rolled his eyes up at Ethel once more, and rubbed his hands in great glee.

Ethel could hear him saying to himself—"What fun it will be! Wou't she scream?"

But he had to leave off his spiteful remarks, as Robinson Crusoe and Alice now began to walk up and down, while the guests sang—

"Poor old Robinson Crusoe, poor old Robinson Crusoe!
They made him a coat of an old nanny-goat,
I wonder how they could do so!
With a ring-a-ting-tang, and a ring-a-ting-tang,
Poor old Robinson Crusoe."

"He is *not* old, all the same," thought Ethel; "and his coat is of seal-skin—what a shame to say it is made of an old nanny-goat!"

"So please your majesty," said the Rod, "Alice must dance the Minuet alone, as Crusoe cannot join her until his leg is mended."

"So be it," said the Queen, "though our pleasure will thus be greatly lessened."

Alice, however, danced so gracefully that the Queen smiled in spite of her sorrow. The little performer kissed her hands many times to Crusoe, to express her wish that he could have joined her, then several other dolls came forward and danced also, and when they had finished a Cupid bowed before the throne, and addressing the Queen, said—

"So please your majesty, the entertainment is now over!"

"We have been much pleased," said the Queen, "and we hope to see you all next week."

Immediately after, at a sign from the Rod, the guests all stood up, bowed to the Queen, and disappeared. . .

"So please your majesty," then said the minister, "have I now your gracious permission to remove my cravat?"

"Certainly, my lord; that sign of your high dignity is no longer necessary," was the smiling answer.

Upon hearing this the Rod, with a great sigh of relief, untied his cravat, folded it carefully up, and put it into his pocket. Ethel heard him saying to himself—

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"In the *pleasant* task I shall be called upon to perform presently I may spoil it, and Royal Cravats are not given away every day."

"What does he mean by performing a pleasant task presently?" asked Ethel of the Fairy.

"Let us hope it has nothing to do with you, my dear," she answered quietly.

"With me, indeed! The idea of such a thing!" said Ethel. "Why, I could shake him to pieces in a minute."

The Rod caught some of this speech, and looked up with a knowing grin as the Queen began to say—"My lord, is there any private business requiring our attention?"

"May it please your majesty," he answered quickly, bestowing his attention once more upon his sovereign, "there certainly is one case I wish to bring before your majesty."

"Proceed, my lord! We will hear it."

"It is to remind your majesty of the poor doll who sought your royal protection last week," said the Rod.

"Ah yes!" replied the Queen. "We had for the time forgotten her! How progresses our poor invalid friend?"



CHAPTER X.

THE INJURED FAVOURITE.



UR last chapter ended with a kind question, asked by the Queen of the Doll Country as to one of her suffering subjects. Her prime minister hastened to relieve her anxiety.

"The invalid after whom your majesty condescends to inquire is much better, I rejoice to say. Would your majesty graciously consent to see her to-day?"

"Certainly, my lord!" was the hearty answer. "Bring her to our presence, we pray you, if she be well enough to come."

The Rod bowed, and at once went towards the palace. Before he mounted the steps he turned and shook his head at Ethel.

"Why does he shake his head at me? And what does the Queen mean by 'our invalid friend'?" asked Ethel wonderingly.

"Ah! Ethel!" said the Fairy in a low, grave tone, "let me entreat of you to keep silent. What you most wish to see will be here presently. Be prepared for a great surprise—but do not speak!"

Ethel started, and felt rather frightened.

In a few minutes the Rod reappeared, leading a doll carefully down the palace steps—a poor old doll, with bandaged head, soiled pink and white dress, and only one boot on!

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" exclaimed Ethel irrepressibly! "if it isn't actually my lost doll at last!"

"My lord," said the Queen, starting, and half rising from her throne, "what noise was that?"

"The voice of an uninvited guest, your majesty!"

"An *uninvited* guest!" echoed the Queen; "where is the rash and audacious intruder?"

"There, your majesty!" and he pointed maliciously at Ethel, who was standing with outstretched arms and flushed cheeks.



LEIGHTON, EROS.

The doll at the same instant turned her little head, and seeing Ethel exclaimed in a voice of terror—

“Oh! protect me, your majesty, I beseech you—it is my mistress!”

“Your MISTRESS,” said the Queen in a surprised tone; and looking at Ethel she said—

“Step forth, girl! and let us look upon so cruel a little tyrant.”

“No,” said Ethel hastily, trying to hide behind the Fairy. “I don’t want to; I have found my doll, and I shall take her home!” Then regaining courage almost as quickly as she had lost it, she came forward again, and called out, “Come here, miss,” to the doll.

“What!” said the Queen, “you dare to disobey our royal commands! and to give orders in this land to *our* subjects! My lord, call out our guard!”

Ethel turned to the Fairy for protection, but the Fairy was gone; and to her horror she saw herself surrounded by tall birch rods, with all their green eyes fixed upon her.

She tried to run away, but could not.

“You are our prisoner,” they hissed in her ear.

"But I don't want to be—let me go, I say!" cried Ethel.

"I won't be your prisoner! I won't, I say—I won't."

"Silence!" said the Queen—"we command you!"

The palace, fountains, cupids, garden—all, had disappeared—and it seemed to Ethel that she was in a darkened room, birch rods all round it, with gleaming eyes, the Queen sitting on a raised chair at one end of it, her prime minister standing by her, and the Pa-and-Ma doll in front of her.

"Little mistress," said the doll, turning her sad face once more to Ethel, who now stood with clenched hands between two rods—"it grieves me, my little mistress, to see you in such a dreadful position."

"That's all very fine to say," said Ethel in angry tones, "when it is all *your* fault. Why did you run away?"

"How can you ask me? How could I stay with you any longer when you so ill-treated me, and ceased to love me? I thought it better to leave you."

The Queen leant forward with a wondering face.

"Your mistress did love you at one time, then?" she said.

"Indeed, your majesty, she did," replied the doll fervently. "She loved me truly for a long time."

“But why then this change?” asked the Queen in surprise. “We should be pleased to hear your history, and how this sad matter came about.”

“Then let *me* go,” said Ethel, “*I* don’t want to listen to her string of complaints.”

“Very likely not,” said the Queen. “But it is our pleasure that you stay and hear this poor doll’s account of her life with you. And further, we *command* you to silence! or beware of the consequences.”

“So please your majesty,” exclaimed the Rod in obsequious and eager tones, “may I stand by the prisoner, with her other guards? She’ll obey me.”

The Queen looked for a few moments at the prisoner, and then said with a stern smile—

“You have my leave, my lord.”


The court thus arranged, the doll commenced her history.





CHAPTER XI.

DOLLY'S HISTORY—"I AM CHOSEN."

OUR majesty," began the invalid doll, with a bow to the Queen, "Your majesty would scarcely recognise my mistress, with her present angry-looking face, as the dear little girl of two years ago. I shall never forget the first time I saw her.

"I was bought with other toys by a nice, kind-looking gentleman, who handled me as carefully as though I had been a baby. He chose me from amongst a great number of dolls, because I was educated! I could say in a pretty manner, 'Ma-ma—Pa-pa.' I was also considered a great beauty, though your majesty would scarcely think so now, judging by my appearance to-day.

“My hair was what is called ‘Auburn,’ and was arranged in the latest Parisian style, a ‘Classical Coiffure,’ with little ringy sort of curls across my forehead, and down the sides of my face. My eyes were a violet blue, with ‘shiny depths,’ as the poets say. My lips were red as Christmas berries, and slightly parted, showing my pearly teeth, and as to my complexion ! that was exquisite !

“I once heard my mistress say to her mother that *she* had no ‘complexion’ except when she ran, she meant *colour*, your majesty—but mine was always the same : and that was true enough. The kind-looking gentleman had a little hesitation in making his choice. There was a beautiful doll under a glass shade on the counter, with which he seemed much pleased, and he was just deciding in her favour when I lisped out timidly ‘Pa-pa.’ I was rather excited, for I felt instinctively that this would be the turning point in my life.

“The gentleman looked towards me with an astonished face when I spoke, and he lifted me up again. Gaining still more courage I repeated my ‘Pa-pa—Ma-ma.’

“That settled the matter. He smiled, and said, ‘Ah ! I will have this one. Such cleverness is sure to please.’

"The doll in the glass-case frowned furiously at my being thus chosen in preference to her, but I cared not for her angry looks, and little thought then that she was destined at a future time to play an important part in my life.

"I was carefully placed in a box, and carried with the other toys to a carriage waiting at the door.

"‘Good-bye, Shop,’ I cried as joyfully as a child cries ‘Good-bye, School,’ at the beginning of the holidays; my heart was as light as a feather, and I felt merry as a cricket.”

Having reached this point in her narrative the Queen graciously commanded a pause, while refreshments were handed round—sweetened hailstones, honey drops from the golden gorse, and other delicacies. Ethel, however, got nothing, and she tried to console herself by sucking her finger, as she used to do when she was a baby.





CHAPTER XII.

MY NEW HOME.



HE roseleaf plates and buttercups carried away by the fairy footmen, Miss Pa-and-Ma resumed her history as follows :—

“When I was again uncovered, your majesty, I found myself in a large room, handsomely furnished, with a bright fire burning in the grate. I felt tempted to jump out of my prison, and sit on a pretty chair which stood on the hearthrug ; but before I could gratify my wish a bell rang, so I lay still and closed my eyes to learn what would happen next. I had not long to wait.

“Eager footsteps came running down the stairs, and into the room ; in a moment there was quite a chorus of little voices—

“‘O papa dear, do tell us, have you brought our Christmas boxes ? Please do tell us quick.’

"A pleasant laugh at their impatience was the first answer they got. But that was soon followed by a kind—

"‘Yes, children, I have, and they are all ready for your approval. Here is a paint-box for you, Percy, a sham fight for you, Bertie, and a tricycle for little Artie.’

"Fresh shouts of delight followed these announcements, and thanks.

"But meantime I had received no mention; and finding myself unnoticed I was determined to attract attention by calling out, ‘Pa-pa—Ma-ma.’

"I had scarcely done so when a silvery little voice exclaimed—

"‘O papa! what is that?’

"Again I said, ‘Pa-pa—Ma-ma,’ and in another minute a laughing face peeped into mine, soft ringlets fell on my cheeks, and a sweet little girl said softly—

"‘What a beauty!—is it for me, papa? Really for me, for my very own?’

"‘Yes, my dear,’ said a loving voice, ‘it is; and I hope you will be pleased with it, and take great care of it.’

"‘O papa! dear papa! indeed I will!’ said Ethel (that is my mistress’s name, your majesty). Then she lifted me

out of the box carefully, murmuring again—‘Isn’t she lovely! Oh! isn’t papa kind to have bought it?’

“‘Yes,’ said her mother, smiling, ‘especially considering the number of dolls you already have. What will you do with them all, Ethel?’



“‘Why, mother, I have *only* eleven besides this one. I would like to have hundreds!’

“‘*Only* eleven,’ laughed her mother, ‘what a family. I am afraid you cannot attend to them all properly.’

“I had begun to think that also, with some fear, but Miss Ethel reassured me by saying earnestly—

“‘Oh yes, I can; and as for this one of course I shall, for you see, mother dear, it is different to any of the others

I have, for she can say "Pa-pa—Ma-ma." None of the others have learnt to talk, you know.'

"After admiring me again a little while Miss Ethel said—

"'I wonder if she means you and my papa, mamma, when she calls out; or is she asking for her own parents? Poor little darling,' she added, as she kissed me, 'I must make you very happy and contented with me. I shall always love you.'"

"A pity she didn't keep her word," muttered the Rod, looking sideways at Ethel, and the doll went on—

"She sat down on the pretty chair I admired when I first looked round the room, and touched my face and hands very gently. What a dear little girl, I thought as I looked at her—her hair was light, and fell in natural curls round her head, with a little fringe across her forehead, something like my own. She had on a white frock, tied with a pale blue sash, a coral necklace, silk stockings, and shoes with little rosettes, and in my eyes she looked altogether beautiful! I thought her still more charming when she begged her mamma for new clothes for me, saying at the same time that she intended to call me the 'Pa-and-Ma doll.'

“‘I am sure, dear,’ answered her mother, ‘you have plenty of doll clothes.’

“‘That is true,’ said Ethel, ‘I have a whole heap. But, mother dear, nothing is good enough for this “queen of beauty ;” so please do give me some new ones.’

“‘Oh, you little coax,’ replied her mother, smiling. ‘Well, I suppose I must say I’ll see.’

“‘Oh ! how nice,’ cried Ethel, springing up to kiss her, ‘I am sure to have them now, because “I’ll see” means yes.’

“And so it proved, at any rate in this case ; for in a few days, your majesty, a beautiful trunk, with lock and key and brass handles, arrived—my wardrobe ! What a wonderful box that was ! It contained a white piqué morning dress, with blue bows, a black velvet costume, of which the jacket was lined with rose-coloured silk, an evening dress of pink and white striped satin, this very dress, your majesty, that I have now on—but oh, how different !”

At this point the poor, shabby little creature was so overcome with emotion as to be unable to proceed for some minutes with her narrative ; and even Ethel put up her hand stealthily to wipe away a tear.

“Was there anything more in your trunk ?” at length

asked the Queen, in the hope of cheering her downcast subject with the show of interest; and the attempt succeeded, the doll answering eagerly—

“Oh yes, please your majesty. Two sets of underclothing beautifully embroidered, lace pocket-handkerchiefs, stockings, dainty little shoes, high-heeled cachmire boots, gloves, parasol, umbrella, hats, fans, one of them direct from Paris, watch and chain, jewellery, and all the necessary articles for a young lady of fashion. Oh! it was a splendid outfit.”

“Fit for royalty itself,” said the Queen almost enviously.

“Truly so I thought,” assented the doll with a little tone of triumph. “As for my new little owner, she was in ecstasies.

“‘It is lovely, mother,’ she cried over and over again; ‘but it will take days to examine properly—everything is so beautiful, and I hardly know what to put on first. Do decide for me, mother dear. What shall dolly wear this evening? for of course she must be dressed to meet papa.’

“‘In that case I should recommend the pink and white satin, dear,’ answered her mother, ‘then she will be in “full dress.” Meantime, you may put on her out-of-door clothes if you like; and I will take you both, as well as your brothers, for a drive with me.’

“This suggestion was received with great favour by both

of us, and seating herself forthwith on a footstool, with me in her arms, my mistress quickly dressed me in my velvet costume and put my sealskin hat coquettishly on my little



head. The whole party were soon ready, and when we entered the carriage I sat on Ethel's knee, and was the admiration of all the children who saw us, with the exception, perhaps, of her two brothers.

"Percy and Bertie teased their sister very much by saying, '*I* was a staring thing, and that I would make a capital shot for "Aunt Sally."' They also asked her 'if my name was Betty or Peggy,' and all sorts of common names."

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"Boys are not supposed to care for dolls, I believe," said the Queen, "in the children's world. But pray continue, I am much interested."

Thus encouraged little Pa-and-Ma brightened up and resumed—

"Ethel was astonished on arriving home to find a fresh surprise for her, in the shape of a lovely bed with pink silk canopy covered with white lace, which was waiting for me. She placed it on a chair by the side of her own bed in readiness for me, and I was charmed with its appearance, it looked so luxurious. Her aunt had sent it as a present to us both.

"When my mistress was dressed that evening she came to me (ah! your majesty, she looked like a fairy!)—and put on my pink and white dress as had been arranged, brushed my hair, and wiped my face with the softest of handkerchiefs.

"On our way downstairs we met the boys, and I thought to myself that now they would be awed by my beauty, but not a bit of it. They only said, 'Good gracious! what a swell she is!'

"'Vulgar boys,' I said to myself, although, of course, I did not very well understand what they meant; and I was

quite consoled for their want of appreciation by the admiration I received from the guests in the drawing-room. I said 'Pa-pa—Ma-ma' to each one, with my best grace, and when I was restored to my mistress my little heart beat with joy. She carried me upstairs, took off my finery and put me in the wardrobe-drawer, telling the nurse that I had better be kept there at night, out of harm's way. She also arranged with her nurse to have a dinner-party in the nursery the next day, so as to introduce me to all the other dolls; and I was so excited at the thoughts of it that I could scarcely sleep."

At this moment, a doll-kingdom postman rode up with important despatches for the Queen, and it was some time before Pa-and-Ma was able to narrate the adventures to be found in the following chapter.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE ELEVEN DOLLS.



HAVING received the Doll Queen's kind invitation at length to give some further particulars of her life's history, Miss Pa-and-Ma continued as follows :—

“The momentous time arrived in due course, when I was to patronise the dinner party given in my honour. I was dressed in my white piqué, with a blue sash to match the bows ; your majesty would have been amused had you seen the dolls' faces when I entered the room. They did not know of my arrival, and were not prepared for the ‘vision of beauty’ now brought before them.

“The table was on the floor, near the window, and ready laid for dinner. The guests were seated round it—five”——

“Pardon me, your majesty, for interrupting the narra-

tive," said the Rod at this moment very earnestly, "but may I ask my eloquent fellow-subject a question?"

"Certainly, my lord," was the instant answer, on receiving which he turned quickly to the doll, and said—

"Were the guests *invited* ones?"

"Oh yes, my lord," she answered, "most assuredly."

"Thank you! I feel relieved," said the Rod, and he glanced at Ethel, muttering, "More than *some* people are."

The doll continued her history—

"Five guests sat on one side, and six on the other—the post of honour at the head of the table was reserved for me.

"‘Now, dollies,’ said my mistress, taking me by the hand, ‘this is an educated young lady, and the greatest beauty that ever was seen. She can say “Pa-pa—Ma-ma.”’ And to prove the truth of her statement I immediately spoke. ‘She is honouring you,’ continued Ethel, ‘by dining with you to-day, I hope you appreciate the attention.’

"As she uttered these words I glanced round the table to see how they were taken, and I met scornful looks on all the dolls’ faces, and from that day they one and all disliked me, but in the pride of my beauty it did not trouble me. Ah! me! I could not see into the future.

"The table was loaded with dainties. There was salmon,

lobster, beef, turkey, ham, plum-pudding, tarts, jellies, cakes, all kinds of fruit, cheese, rolls, and little pats of butter—all were arranged on pretty dishes—and the meats were garnished with coloured jelly.

“As for the guests, I must confess they were rather a motley collection. On one side of the table sat the ‘character dolls,’ as Ethel called them. First came the Princess Trebizond, a gorgeous creature, as you know, dressed in rose-coloured satin. Her skirts were very short, but her satin dress had a deep gold fringe at the bottom of it, headed with three rows of gold braid. She had several strings of pearls round her neck and arms, and a head-dress of tiny coins. Her hair was golden, and fell below her waist in rippling waves. She certainly looked very magnificent.

“Next to the princess sat a sweet-looking doll dressed as ‘Bo-peep,’ who, by the by, treated me more kindly than the rest. She wore a blue silk quilted petticoat, white overskirt, and a dainty little straw hat.”

“She would have made a charming shepherdess, we think,” said the Queen; “no doubt the one in green who looked for her sheep this afternoon is her successor. But proceed.”

“Handsome Robinson Crusoe, your majesty, came next. He had not got a broken leg then! He was accompanied by

a lovely doll attired in pink satin and swansdown, whom you know well here as Alice. They looked a loving couple, and were whispering to each other all the time. But being sweethearts they were held excused."

"Ah! no doubt," said the Queen, smiling. "We have been told of their mutual attachment. They seem devoted to each other. Crusoe we admire extremely, and Alice's



attention to him since his accident is quite touching. Your narrative interests us much."

"More than it does me," muttered Ethel.

"Did you dare to open your lips?" growled the Rod.

But he had no time to wait for an answer as Miss Pa-and-Ma continued—

"The last of the character dolls, your majesty, was a

French peasant girl in holiday attire. She wore a gay-coloured wincey skirt, black velvet bodice, muslin kerchief, long gold earrings, velvet head-dress, and blue silk apron, trimmed with gold braid. She turned to me with a winning smile and said—

“ ‘Parlez-vous Francais?’ ”

“I looked at her questioningly. She repeated her words, ‘Parlez-vous Francais?’ Unfortunately I could not understand her, but not to appear proud or rude, I replied—‘Pa-pa—Ma-ma,’ when I was assailed with an insulting burst of laughter from most of the guests.

“ ‘Educated, indeed,’ cried Princess Trebizond, ‘when she cannot speak French!’ ”

“ ‘We don’t pretend to be educated,’ said Bo-peep, with a merry but kind little look at me, ‘so don’t “Parlez-vous” at all.’ All the other dolls round the table laughed at my being placed in such an awkward position, and evidently enjoyed my confusion. The black-eyed peasant girl, who was the innocent cause of my misery, has long since sought retirement in the dusthole.

“The remaining six dolls your majesty knows well by their family name of ‘the Misses Nursery-Dolls.’ They are a shabby, untidy set of sisters, poor things! But after all it

is not their fault. They bore even in those days signs of ill-usage and hard wear. I supposed then that the boys had brought them to their poverty-stricken condition, for I had not the faintest suspicion that my dear little mistress was herself capable of reducing them to such a wretched state. Now, alas! I have lost my happy ignorance. The only member of the nursery family with whom, I believe, your majesty is unacquainted was the giantess.

“She was sitting on a chair much too small for her, and had a habit of half-closing her eyes when she looked at you, as if she had not sufficient strength of mind even to keep them open. Her name was ‘Lady Maud,’ but in spite of her aristocratic title and fashionable attire, she was very ungainly in appearance. The only spark of animation she displayed was when she informed me that her costume had been bought in Regent Street.”

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At this point in the invalid doll's history three deputies from a large company of toys begged permission to present a petition to the sovereign, to be allowed to fly from their present abodes to the Ormond Street Hospital.

The petition was instantly granted, with the Queen's hearty good wishes for success in their attempt.

During this episode Ethel murmured with a good deal of interest—

“Why, how strange! I am glad the toys like going there, because mamma sent off a lot of our old ones to that place the other day, I think.”

When the deputation had retired, and the bustle of their coming had subsided, miss Pa-and-Ma continued her history:—

“Just as the table was being cleared of the delicacies to which all but myself had, I believe, done ample justice, the boys came into the room, looking ready for any mischief. Ethel at once ran forward, exclaiming—

“‘Now, Percy, I won’t have you near my dolls, just go away, please, all of you.’

“I was glad to hear her say it, for I was frightened of her brothers, but they were very disappointed.

“‘O Ethel!’ they said, ‘let us stay, do, and have some fun. We won’t hurt any of them this time, nor even quizz the “swell one,”’ meaning me,—your majesty.

“Still my mistress hesitated.

“‘Well really, boys, you see,’ she said, ‘you so often break your promises that I am afraid to trust you.’

“‘Just try us this once more, though,’ they pleaded again; ‘do, there’s a kind sister!’

"Ethel was too fond of her brothers to be able to say No any more when they begged like this.

"'Very well,' she answered, 'I will trust you this once more. What shall we play at?'

"'Anything you like, Sis,' was the grateful answer. 'Do you require any punishments inflicted? have all the dolls behaved themselves?'

"'No,' said Ethel, 'this naughty girl has spoilt her frock. When I was holding the glass to her mouth, she jerked her head, and the milk went all over her—it was very careless! and I think she ought to be punished!'

"'So she ought, of course!' cried those boys eagerly, although they were not at all fond of being punished themselves. 'We'll try her by court-martial,' they continued after a moment's thought, 'and hear what the sentence will be.'

"'A court martial!' asked my mistress, 'what is that?'

"'It's a way they have in the army,' said the boys. 'A soldier is brought before his commanding officer, and ere you can say "Jack Robinson," he's strung up to a tree, or sometimes he's shot, and there he's done for.'

"'Oh!' said Ethel, looking very grave for a minute. But then her face cleared, and she said, laughing—

"'Oh! I forgot. It's only to be done to a doll, and dolls can't feel.'

"That was all she knew about it, you see, your majesty. Ignorant child! She even added, 'That will do nicely, Percy! it will be great fun.'

"'Of course it will,' answered Percy. 'And I'll be the officer, Ethel; and Bertie the prosecuting counsel; Artie, baby, nurse, and the dolls, the jury; and the careless doll the soldier.'

"As he spoke he arranged us round the room, placing me much too near himself for me to feel quite comfortable. I confess I even tried to move my chair farther off, but could not. I had to sit where I was, and watch the dismal proceedings.

"'Silence in court!' proclaimed Percy when all was in order. 'Bring forth the prisoner!'

"I could see the poor dolly trembling as Ethel led her forward, and she turned a piteous face to our mistress, as though imploring pardon, but to my astonishment our little mistress seemed to look upon the affair as a good joke, and paid no heed to the mute appeal."

"How cruel," sighed the Queen, while Ethel, who had been standing quietly and calmly lately, listening to the doll's history as if she rather enjoyed it, now began to laugh softly to herself as at some amusing recollection.

The Rod stared at her, and placed his hand upon her shoulder, saying—



“Beware, turn round to me this instant.”

She did so, but still laughing, and she shook her curly head at him mischievously, as much as to say—

"I know you'd like me to speak, so that you might punish me, but I won't thus please you."

"The officer," continued the Pa-and-Ma doll, "addressed the prisoner very gruffly and said—

"Your mistress accuses you of a very grievous offence—that of wilfully spilling milk on your clean dress. What say you, prisoner, guilty or not guilty?'

"There was a long, dreadful minute of utter silence. Then the officer resumed—

"You do not answer, prisoner. That proves that you are guilty: therefore, the sentence of the court is, that you be hanged immediately, if not sooner—and—on the spot!"

"There was a hook in the ceiling from which the baby's swing was suspended, so the boys passed a long piece of string over it, tied one end round the doll's neck, and speedily hoisted her up. They allowed no space between the sentence and its execution, and we all sat round staring at the sight.

"What shall we do to her next,' said Bertie, 'for this isn't half enough punishment for her, you know?'

"Oh! make her dance a hornpipe. But wait a moment till I put the cord under her arms; the wax of her neck is a little cracked, I am afraid, and I don't want to hurt her too much.'

“ ‘ All right,’ said Percy. ‘ That will do.’ ”

“ And then he whistled a tune, and the poor doll was made to dance in the midst of all its misery.”

“ Horrible ! horrible ! ” exclaimed the Queen.

“ Ah ! you say horrible,” said the Pa-and-Ma doll, “ but the children screamed with delight, your majesty, and I am bitterly ashamed to confess it, I could not help laughing myself, the poor dolly looked so comical. I am sorry to say she saw me laughing, and I heard her say solemnly, ‘ *This will be your fate some day.*’ I paid very little heed, however, to her warning. In that heyday of my youth and beauty it seemed so impossible that such miseries could ever fall upon my head. Ah ! me ! ”

“ When the boys were tired of their ‘ lark,’ as they termed it, the doll was taken down, and put into the doll box with all the other nursery dolls ; whilst the character dolls and myself were laid with far more ceremony in our respective drawers. When I thus had quiet time for reflection I began to feel grieved and shocked at what I had seen, but at length I fell asleep, consoling myself with the thought, that, at any rate, it was only *common* dolls who were treated in that manner.”



CHAPTER XIV.

MY RIVAL.



“ELL, your majesty, for nearly two years my life was a continual round of gaieties, and then my mistress appeared to weary of me ; sometimes days and days passed and I never saw her face. I began to feel unhappy and dissatisfied, and wondered what I had done to deserve such treatment.

“One night about this time I heard a great noise proceeding from the nursery. Cups were rattling, and dolls singing and dancing. ‘They are having a party,’ I said to myself, ‘and here am I alone and miserable.’ I longed to be amongst them. ‘Oh ! why am I aristocratic ?’ I cried in my bitterness. I could not sleep that night, nor for weeks afterwards. I kicked the drawer with my little boots to attract my companions’ attention ; I fancied they heard me,

but if so it was only to exult over my lonely position ; they made no effort to relieve it. My pride was certainly vanishing, for I at length determined to hide myself when an opportunity should occur, and to visit the nursery in the night. Circumstances favoured me.

“One day when my mistress had at last condescended once more to notice me, she left me on her bed when she drove out with her mamma, and towards evening I slipped down to the floor and crept under it. I was quite decided to go to the nursery after midnight, and join in the toy festivities. Of course it would be a condescension on my part, and I should tell the dolls and toys of the fact ; but my isolation was growing altogether unbearable. I could have almost consented to become a nursery doll for the sake of sharing in the nightly merriment.

“Full of hopes and fears for the coming hour I must have fallen asleep at last in my hiding-place, for I suddenly awoke to hear my mistress’s voice pronounce the words, ‘*New doll.*’

“I was instantly all attention. What words were those ? *New doll!* Was I still dreaming ? I asked myself. Alas, no ! I heard the conversation continued—

“‘Yes, Nurse,’ said Ethel, ‘papa said this evening that I

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had been very careful indeed with my Pa-and-Ma doll, and that as she was now getting an old lady I must have a new one.'

"My hair stood on end, your majesty. Old lady, indeed! *Me* an old lady!!! This was too much! 'Kill me at once,' I said to myself, 'anything, but don't let me be called *an old lady*.'"

"That would indeed be a sad fate," said the Queen in a sympathetic tone.

"Are you an old lady?" muttered the Rod to Ethel.
"You are much older than your dolls."

But Ethel had no time to answer.

"'Of course I thanked papa,' continued Ethel (said the doll, going on with her narrative); 'and I called him a darling dear papa and all sorts of nice names; but do you know, Nurse, the boys looked delighted too, and they put their heads together in a way which I knew in a minute meant mischief, and I was right?' When they saw me looking at them Percy said at once—

"'Now, Sis, then, if you're going to have a new favourite, we can try the old one by court-martial.'

"'Only think, Nurse, to try the doll by court-martial which has been my best for such a long time! Of course I

said at once "No, I will never allow that, I can tell you, for I love her still."

"Ah, your majesty, I cannot tell you how grateful I felt for those few words of kindness. One of her little kid shoes lay on the floor within my reach, I picked it up and kissed it, while the Nurse said—

"‘Of course you love her still, Miss Ethel, and *you* do not consider the Pa-and-Ma doll an old lady, do you?’

"‘Certainly not,’ was the answer, to my great relief. ‘Papa was only in fun; I saw his eyes twinkle when he said it. But where is the doll, Nurse? I left her on my bed.’

"‘She is safe enough somewhere,’ said the Nurse. ‘I will look for her when you are in bed.’

"When I heard that promise given I lay very quiet, your majesty, for some hours; but when the gas was turned down and the household in bed, I crept quietly out of the room. The nursery-door was just opposite, and a little bit open; the fun had commenced—I heard the sailor boy singing ‘Ten little niggers,’ &c., and the other dolls sang the chorus.

"I went very quietly to the door, and was just going to peep in when something said ‘Hist,’—and all was still.

“‘Don’t be frightened, dears,’ I said, ‘it’s only me.’—No answer. ‘I’m the Pa-and-Ma doll come to listen to your beautiful singing,’ I said coaxingly.

“But still there was silence. I began to feel desperate. ‘I will not tell what you say and do in the night,’ I pleaded once more; ‘so pray continue your sports, pray admit me to your circle. My only wish is to become friendly with you, I will never be rude or haughty with you again. I’m so sorry I have been unamiable in the past; please forgive me, and let me join you to-night.’

“But my humility had come too late. Still I got no answer, unless a little chuckle from the ‘doll-box’ could be so called. All my pride returned, and I felt very angry.

“‘Ha! ha! you silly dolls and toys,’ I cried sharply, ‘do you think I mean it? I would run away at once, if I thought that I should ever be compelled to associate with such low, uneducated creatures as all of you,—so there.’

“And with this parting thrust I went back across the landing, feeling furiously indignant, and heard a doll call after me—‘Pa-pa-a—ma-ma-a;’ and, would your majesty believe it? the fun and merriment commenced again more uproariously than before.”

“It was very strange behaviour on their part,” said the

Queen. "We cannot understand it. Those nursery dolls must be spoken with at our next garden party."

"It's not only I who am bad, you see," muttered Ethel to the Rod.

"Anyway, they are *your* dolls," retorted the Rod, "and take example by you, no doubt."

The Pa-and-Ma doll looked round a moment at the two whisperers, and then continued—

"For some time after this I was cured of all wish for company. I could see, when it was too late, how ridiculous I had made myself by my haughtiness, and how much better it would have been had I acted differently towards my associates.

"I cried all that night, regardless of my complexion, and when my mistress found me in the morning she kissed me, and said she was sorry I had been on the floor all night, and wondered why I looked so unhappy.

"‘If I could only unburden my little heart to her,’ I thought, ‘and ask her not to have a “new doll”!’ I was so miserable, your majesty.

"After that night, however, I was neglected more than before, and rarely saw my mistress. I often wondered why she did not put me in the doll-box, and let me become a

nursery doll! The others *must* associate with me then, I thought. One day I heard voices on the landing, and footsteps passing frequently from the nurseries to Ethel's room.

“ ‘ I'm so glad you've come,' I heard my mistress say ;
' how long are you going to stay ? ' ”

“ ‘ We don't know,' said a voice which I distinguished as that of one of Ethel's cousins. Florry and Mabel had come to pay a long-promised visit to her ; they were charming little girls, and I had been a great favourite with them on their former visits.

“ ‘ But they will not recognise me now,' I thought, ‘ I am so changed ! ’ I lay listening to every sound, and at last sighed for joy as I heard Florry say—

“ ‘ Where is the Pa-and-Ma doll, Ethel ? ’ ”

“ ‘ In the wardrobe drawer, of course, as usual,' answered Ethel.

“ ‘ Please let me see her,' said Florry.

“ ‘ Oh ! Never mind her now,' called my mistress from her room.

“ ‘ Come and look at my new work-box instead.' ”

“ ‘ Ah, but do let me bring her with me, Ethel,' persisted Florry, ‘ I won't spoil her ! ’ ”

“ ‘Spoil me!’ I echoed drearily. ‘Alas! None can do that now!’

“ Meantime Ethel replied carelessly, ‘Oh, you can have her if you like, of course. But I can’t understand why you are so anxious to see her.’

“ Without waiting to explain this matter, Florry in an instant had opened the drawer. I kept my eyes closed, determined not to witness the surprise which I knew would be depicted on Florry’s face.

“ ‘O Ethel!’ she exclaimed, ‘how dolly is changed, her beauty is gone! what a pity! and how soiled her dress is, she does not look like the same doll at all! I’m so sorry.’

“ ‘Really, Florry, you expect my dolls to last for ever,’ said Ethel in pettish tones. ‘I have had her over two years! besides, I’m getting tired of her. Papa has promised me a new doll. I expect it home to-night. Don’t bother with that one now, come and play.’

“ ‘Poor dolly!’ said Florry, as she sat on a chair and rocked me tenderly to her. ‘I think you have too many dolls, Ethel, you cannot attend to them all properly, I’m sure. How many have you now?’

“ ‘I have not counted them lately,’ said Ethel, ‘but I

think, including best and common, large and small, about sixteen.'

" 'Well, Ethel,' said Florry, '*I* should not care for so many. I only like one at a time.'

" 'Nonsense, Florry, the more the merrier,' said my fickle little mistress.

" Florry nursed me for some time, and then put me tenderly back in my drawer. I gave Ethel an imploring look, before it was shut, but in vain. She took no notice of me !

" 'Oh ! heartless mistress,' I moaned, 'how can you treat me thus ?'

" 'I dreamt that night, your majesty, of the happy days I had spent in the past, and I regretted bitterly that my mistress's love had gone from me. I was thinking sadly of my pretty bed, and my beautiful wardrobe—when suddenly the drawer was opened, and my mistress stood over me, saying eagerly—

" 'Move the Pa-and-Ma doll, please, Nurse, for fear of crushing this "Queen of Beauty."'

" Oh ! familiar words, but not now applied to me.

" 'After all, I don't like putting her here, Nurse,' said Ethel again after a moment's thought, 'she ought to sleep by my side.'

“‘Ah! to be sure,’ answered Nurse, ‘but let her stay for one night, Miss Ethel, and I will prepare the Canopy bed for her to-morrow.’

“‘Very well! just for one night then,’ she agreed. ‘I will do so. And so good night, my lovely dolly, good night.’

“Then the drawer was shut without *one* word for me.

“Let me pause, your majesty! I can scarcely speak—a lump comes into my throat now, when I think of that night.”

“Ah! doubtless. We are indeed grieved for you,” said the Queen, “and we wonder how your mistress can stand there, and hear your history unmoved.”

Ethel smiled, as much as to say, “I would not stand here if I could help it.”

The doll continued:—“The drawer was closed, your majesty, and I was forced to bear the presence of my rival without a word. ‘What is she like? and how is she dressed?’ were my first thoughts! But I smothered my curiosity, and lay still, scarcely breathing. ‘Would she speak to me,’ I wondered. I was soon satisfied on that point.

“‘Well, I’m sure,’ said my rival in a laughty tone, ‘this

is a nice dungeon to put *me* in ! and with a companion too !
How do I know that she is fit society for me !'

" ' I felt extremely annoyed !

" ' Who are you ? ' she asked at last, addressing me in a
tone of irritation.

" ' I'm a young lady,' I answered haughtily.

" ' *In*-deed ! Well, young lady, *what* are you ?'

" ' A doll like yourself, to be sure.'

" ' *I* am a lady-doll,' she said.

" ' Who bought you ? ' I asked, determined to have some of
the questioning on my side.

" ' A gentleman,' she answered.

" ' What was he like ? ' I inquired.

" ' Oh ! ra-ther good looking, with dark curly hair and a
beard,' she answered, ' and he had a pleasant sort of face.'

" ' Surely,' I thought, ' it cannot be Ethel's papa ! but the
description is the same.'

" ' Are you very pretty ? ' I next asked in anxious tones.

" ' Certainly, I am ! ' she replied. ' So pretty that I have
been kept under a glass case for years.'

" ' Glass case,' I said to myself, ' oh ! dear me ! I hope it
is not the doll who looked so angry because I was chosen
instead of her ! ' I longed more than ever to look at her,

your majesty, to ease my mind. 'If you are so very beautiful,' I remarked, 'why have you not been bought before?'

" 'For a very simple reason, Miss ; I was too expensive !'

" 'And now, may I ask what *you* are like ?' she said. I did not answer. Alas ! what could I say ?

" 'Did you hear my question ?' she inquired rather sharply. '*What are you like ?*'

" 'Well—I must tell,' I began in faltering tones, 'I have been very lovely—but—of course you know—everybody grows older—and when you come to the children's world—you age very quickly—and '——

" 'Ah ! I see how it is,' she interrupted with a cool sneer. 'You are evidently old and faded, or you would not take such pains to inform me of what you *have* been.'

" 'Certainly,' I answered, 'I am not as young as I used to be ; but I have lived a much longer time than dolls generally live—my extreme beauty was the cause of my long-continued favour.'

" 'I should like to see you,' she said.

" I felt very indignant with her for the contemptuous tone. 'I don't feel inclined to talk any more to-night,' I said shortly. 'I am weary, please shut your eyes and go to sleep.'

" 'Shut my eyes !' she exclaimed, 'certainly not.'

“‘Do you mean to tell me,’ I said, ‘that you sleep with them open? how dreadful! All first-class dolls are able to close their eyes, I believe.’

“‘I did not say I *could* not close them,’ she replied, ‘but I prefer to keep them open.’

“‘Nonsense,’ I replied, ‘no one would sleep with them open from choice.’

“‘*I do*,’ she answered, ‘because you miss so much when you close your eyes, and I like to see all that is going on around me.’

“‘Then of course you never really sleep,’ I said. ‘But *my* opinion is, that a doll ought to close her eyes at night, because she looks so charming when she opens her little eyes and says “Good morning” to her mistress.’

“‘Ah, yes,’ she replied, ‘but no mistress would tire of looking at eyes like mine for ever. No need to shut them to make them look more beautiful.’

“We did not speak for some time after this—I felt disgusted with her vanity; then I said ‘Good-night.’

“She did not answer, so I concluded that she was already asleep. For my part, I felt too unhappy to sleep. ‘O Ethel, Ethel!’ I cried, ‘what have I done to deserve such treatment!’”

"Poor little doll," said the Queen, as little Pa-and-Ma once more paused to sob. "We are truly sorry for you; but pray continue."

"Continue, indeed! Oh dear, I do wish she had finished her tale," thought Ethel to herself. "I want to go home; no one knows I am out. Mother would be frightened enough if she knew, I am sure. I wonder if I dare run?"

She looked round, and saw that the rods were closer to her than before.

"Oh! those rods are a bother," she thought. "It would evidently be quite impossible to pass through them, so I must just be contented to stay, I suppose, till that tiresome thing has done. She'll send me to sleep, if she goes on much longer."





CHAPTER XV.

I COME TO GRIEF.



HETHER Ethel really had fallen into a short doze she could not decide, or whether only some train of thought had occupied her mind. But however that might be, she was suddenly recalled to her present position by hearing the small, somewhat doleful voice of her emigrant doll continuing her narrative in the following words—

“The next morning, your majesty,” said Pa-and-Ma with a deep sigh, “my mistress opened the drawer, and took out my rival. She never even looked at me; but in a few minutes my friend Florry came to me, and lifting me gently up, whispered in my ear—

“‘I like *you* better, even as you are, than the new doll.’

“How I thanked her in my heart for her kind words.

“Ethel had my rival in her faithless arms, and great was

the discussion as to what her name should be ; all the uncommon ones were enumerated, but none seemed appropriate.

“‘I know what it shall be,’ cried Ethel at last. ‘We’ll call her the “Lady doll,” because she is dressed like a grown-up young lady.’”

“What an extraordinary coincidence,” said the Queen. “She called herself a ‘Lady doll.’”

“It was indeed, your majesty, and I at once looked at her with even more curiosity than I had felt before. I received a great shock.”

“What! Were your suspicions then correct? Did you recognise her?” asked the Queen.

“Alas! your majesty, I did indeed,” replied the doll. “Florry had hitherto kept my face hidden in her dress ; but when the breakfast-bell rang Ethel put her ‘Lady doll’ on the nursery-table, and, strange to say, Florry placed me there also—a little distance from my rival.

“My position on the table was most fortunate for the gratification of my desire. I raised my head to look at her, and there she stood. Your majesty may well be surprised ; yes, actually stood, with her dress sweeping the table. Ah, your majesty, she was indeed grand! quite regal looking! I almost forgave Ethel’s desertion of me.

"Her dress was superb! rich black silk, made 'princess' fashion, and trimmed with gold braid. But the great charm in my eyes was her *train*, such a length, it clung to her in folds; of all things, that which I wished for most was a *train*; how nice it would be, I thought, to have a long sweeping dress.—But to return to my rival.

"A flounced muslin skirt just peeped beneath her dress, a fan was suspended by her side, and she wore a black velvet 'Gainsborough' hat lined with pink satin. I was lost in admiration of her; I moved a little nearer, so as to obtain a view of her face—and I at once recognised the doll from the glass case."

"How strange!" ejaculated the Queen.

"'Oh dear me,' I said to myself, 'what shall I do now?'" and I gave a deep sigh. My rival heard me; she turned and saw me.

"'What!' she exclaimed, 'is that *you*? Well, I never! You *are* changed—poor old doll!'"

"'I know I am,' I answered. 'But look at the life I have been leading for the last two years, while you have been shut up like a sort of a nothing in a glass case. The wonder is that I am living at all; I have been so much sought after, no party was complete without me. My life

has been, until lately, a continued round of gaieties ; while *you* have been preserved under a glass shade—you triumph over me now ; but your turn will come some day, see if it doesn't,' and my eyes flashed.



“‘Impossible!’ she answered. ‘I am too lovely ever to be destroyed.’

“The return of my mistress and her cousins to the nursery put an end to further conversation. What would they have said had they known of it, I wondered. Little girls have no idea what unhappiness is caused through the advent of a new

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doll. I certainly think the old one ought to be put away before the new one comes."

"That is our opinion," said the Queen, "but proceed."

"What an encouragement of jealousy," muttered Ethel. But no one there deigned to notice the interruption, and the doll continued—

"‘Well, Florry,’ said my mistress, ‘how do you like the “Lady doll”? Are you *very* pleased with her?’

"‘She is very handsome,’ answered Florry, ‘but not to be compared with what the Pa-and-Ma doll was two years ago. She is not as refined looking, her face is too red, and she cannot speak.’

"I glanced at my rival’s face, to see what impression this remark had made"—

"Well?" interrupted the Queen, with natural inquisitiveness.

"But she did not appear to have noticed it, your majesty. She stood quite still, with her eyes fixed upon Ethel, as though listening for her to speak to her. My mistress looked back at her attentively, and then said—

"‘She is beautiful and stately-looking, but somehow, Florry, I think you are right; I do not feel as though I could love her like I did the Pa-and-Ma doll. *She was so*

sweet and babyish, and when she said "Ma-ma," I used to think she was fretting for her mother. I wonder if dolls have mothers, Florry? But, of course, they must have, or how could she have been taught to say "pa-pa and ma-ma"? Wouldn't it be nice if dolls could talk to us?'

"'Very,' answered Florry, 'only that would be impossible. But I have been told that they *can* talk in the night, and walk about also. I am inclined to think that they have a language of their own, and then they tell each other all that has happened during the day. What a string of complaints some must have.'

"'Mine, for instance,' laughed Ethel. 'I'm sure my nursery dolls have a great deal to say of me. You know, dear, I let the boys play with them—we have such fun! we try them by court-martial, hang them, cut off their noses sometimes when we play at being brigands, or their arms, just as the court decides or the doctor says is necessary for their health. What a dreadful little girl I must appear to them, and how they must tremble at Percy's and Bertie's voices. But do you think it is true, Florry?'"

As Miss Pa-and-Ma repeated her little mistress's former question the Queen turned to Ethel, and said sternly—

"You know *now*, girl, that dolls *can* talk, and walk in the night. You have seen and heard for yourself."

Ethel nodded her head. She dared not speak, as the Rod's eyes were fixed upon her.

"Proceed," said the Queen, turning back to her poor subject, who resumed :—

"‘Have you read Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales?’ asked Florry of her cousin. ‘We have. They are charming. He gives everything a proper human being life during the night; toys, furniture, thimbles, needles, and all, and some of the tales make you feel as if you must cry. I never tire of the book, and it does me a great deal of good, for whenever I feel inclined to be angry with my dolls I think of what they may say of me in the night.’

"‘*I* shouldn't mind what they complained of me,’ said Ethel, ‘so I will get up to-night, and listen at the nursery door.’

"‘It won't be a bit of good. They would hear you, and keep still,’ said Florry.

"‘But not if I crept like a mouse?’

"‘Oh yes, however you crept. It is no use; they are so clever they would *know* you were there, so you may save yourself the trouble of going. No mortal ever yet heard them

—and I have been told also, Ethel, that there is a “Doll Country,” and that the dolls go there sometimes, and if little girls whip them they stay there, and are never seen again. But *where* that country is, no one knows, or ever will do.’ ”

“ I know where it is, to my cost,” thought Ethel, as she looked at all the rods, “and I shall advise Florry never to wish to visit it. I wish now, heartily enough, that I had not come.”

The rods appeared to understand Ethel’s thoughts, for at this moment they wriggled about threateningly while Pa-and-Ma continued to describe Florry’s conversation with her cousin.

“ ‘I have lost dolls in a most mysterious manner,’ continued Florry, ‘and my mother has told me that they have run away to the Doll Country. At any rate, I have seen nothing more of them. I remember once, a long time ago, Mabel whipped one of her dolls, and left her in a corner all night. It was very cold weather, and in the morning Mabel, repenting of her heartlessness, went to find her doll, to kiss and make friends, but *she was gone!* Mabel cried bitterly, but she has never whipped a doll since.’ ”

“ ‘If I caught one of my dolls running away,’ said Ethel, ‘I would whip her though, or punish her some way,

so that she would never attempt it again. I never lost a doll that I know of, although, to be sure, many times I have missed seeing the common ones in the doll-box, but I never troubled myself to make any inquiries respecting them. Possibly they may have run away; but if ever I find it out, they will not forget it.'

"This was pleasant for me to hear, your majesty; considering that I intended to make my escape some day, I felt rather nervous.

"During the time my friend Florry remained in the house I was put in my drawer at night, but in the day time I was left lying on the floor or on the chairs, and taken up by hands that in former days would not have dared to touch me. I never resented it, I had become very meek, my pride was all gone now.

"I had one satisfaction, however, during this period of my life, in seeing that Ethel did not take as much notice of the Lady doll as she used to do of me! She did not appear to *love* her, but was proud of taking her out because she was so beautifully dressed. However, she only possessed that one costume, your majesty, and I was pleased to think that *mine* would not fit her.

"One day I was sitting on a chair in the nursery brood-

ing over my altered position, when the Nurse came into the room, and placed the Lady doll just inside a large trunk. When she had gone I said anxiously to my rival—

“ ‘Where are you going?’ ”

“ ‘To the sea-side,’ she answered, ‘with my mistress and her cousins. I have not been very well lately, and they think a change of air will do me good.’ ”

“ ‘What is that hanging out of your pocket?’ I asked quickly, trying to stifle a sigh. No one thought about *my* weak health.

“I pointed at a little morsel of something white.

“ ‘It is my pocket handkerchief,’ she answered, ‘why do you ask?’ ”

“ ‘Because I recognise it as one of mine,’ I remarked, ‘and I should have thought that a grand young lady like you would have had handkerchiefs of her own.’ ”

“She bit her lip with vexation.

“I could not help saying it, your majesty. She exulted over my downfall, and always gave herself such airs when I was present. My mistress came to the door—looked in—then calling the Nurse, told her ‘to please carry the Lady doll down to the carriage, that she would take it in her arms instead of having it packed.’ ”

“ ‘Well! well!’ I sobbed, as Ethel ran off, not even a look for me!

“I sat on the chair all day. What a miserable day that was! Towards evening the Nurse saw me, and exclaimed—

“ ‘*You here!* what a *beauty* you have grown!’ And she laughed. ‘I suppose I must put you away, but you are not worth keeping in the wardrobe now,’ and going to the doll box she *dropped me in!* . . .

“ ‘Help! help!’ I called, ‘I’m killed! oh, dear! what is the matter?’ Such a strange fainting sensation passed over me! and I heard a cracking noise. I put my hand to my face, and felt a great crack right across my forehead.

“ ‘Nurse! nurse,’ I called, ‘I’m cracked.’

“ ‘Clumsy creature,’ said a doll that was under me, ‘why don’t you look where you are going? You nearly broke my nose! Do get up.’ ”

“Excuse the interruption, your majesty,” said the Rod at this moment, “but I wish to state that as the Pa-and-Ma doll was an *uninvited* guest in the box, she was naturally not welcome!”

The invalid smiled pitifully at this criticism, and continued—

“All my answer to my new companion’s remonstrance was a groan.

“‘Go out of this box,’ said the dolls, ‘we don’t want you here,’ and they tried to jerk me upwards.

“I was forced to speak.

“‘Oh dollies, I beg of you not to be unkind to me,’ I pleaded. ‘It was not my wish to come in here. I was flung in, and I am in great pain ; please forgive me for all I have done, and pity me now. I will be very different for the future towards you all.’

“A pretty doll with china hands, that had not known me long, said—

“‘Come, come, don’t cry, I, at any rate, will forgive you ! I feel sure you are penitent, and I’m sure your companions will think the same now.’

“‘No, indeed,’ the dolls answered. ‘We cannot forgive her, she has always been so haughty with us, and if she is determined to stay where she is not wanted, she need expect no kindness from us.’

“Bitter tears rained down my face, your majesty. ‘What shall I do ?’ I cried.

“‘Never mind, dear,’ whispered the china doll. She was so sweet and gentle, your majesty, and she held my burning face between her cool hands. ‘You will soon be better. That nurse is always clumsy with us, I think.

Try and sleep, dear, then you will not feel so much pain.

“Sleep was impossible. I must have lain in that box many, many days; but I wondered where my mistress was, and would she feel grieved when she saw me. I gradually got better, but my head still pained me. At last I heard her familiar voice. I became almost wild with joy; I flattered myself that she would now take me out of the dreadful box, and nurse me back to health. The first words I could distinguish increased my hopes.

“‘I cannot find the Pa-and-Ma doll for you, anywhere, Florry; she is not in her proper place in the wardrobe.’

“‘Ma-ma, ma-ma,’ I called in a feeble voice. But weak as it was, that good little Florry heard me.

“‘O Ethel!’ she exclaimed, running to me. ‘She is here! in the doll-box! and oh, do look at her poor little face!’

“‘What a shame,’ said Ethel. ‘Who has done this, I wonder! O dolly, dolly! I’m so sorry.’ She kissed me and tied a bandage round my head; and to do her justice, she did look very sorry, although her sorrow did not last long.

“‘Well, Florry,’ she said, after a few minutes’ gaze at me; ‘the Pa-and-Ma doll is really done for at last. I am

sorry I have neglected her so much, but it cannot be helped now.'

"And then—*she put me back in the box!* Florry gave me a loving, sorrowful look as the lid was being shut down,



and I never saw her again. Some day I will beseech your majesty to let me be the bearer of a passport for her to the Doll Country."

"Sweet little girl, we will gladly welcome her," said the

Queen. "But meantime, tell us, where was your rival all this time?"

"You shall hear, your majesty.

"One afternoon Mabel and Artie came into the nursery when I had been tossed out of the doll-box on to the floor. They had the Lady doll between them, and were making her walk across the room, when lo! Mabel fell over a footstool and the doll under her. When Mabel got up she found that the doll's face was utterly smashed.

"'What shall we do, Artie?' she asked.

"'There's a guy,' said Artie by way of answer. And then a sudden impulse seizing him, he pushed both her eyes in.

"'Now we've done it, certainly,' said Mabel; 'I broke her face, and you've pushed her eyes in. But oh, Artie, there will be such a fuss when Ethel sees her.'

"'Well, let's hide her,' said Artie, 'and say nothing about it.'

"And so they did. But where? No one ever knew but I and they."

"That's true," murmured Ethel, "and they won't tell."

"Every room was searched—both delinquents assisting. They whispered together and laughed at the non-success of



LEIGHTON, BROS.

THE LADY DOLL.—Page 172.

the search. It was most mysterious, I often wondered if she had sought your majesty's protection."

"We do not know her," said the Queen. "And from




what you have told us of her, we scarcely wish to make her acquaintance."

"Ah! I fear my account may have been prejudiced," said Miss Pa-and-Ma humbly. "But I hasten to conclude my history."



CHAPTER XVI.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

“HAD been for some time longing to escape from my present misery, your majesty, when at last an opportunity occurred of carrying out my plan.

“The doll-box was left open one day. When all was still I jumped out, ran down the stairs, and stood at the hall-door ready to go when it was opened. I did not think at the time that I had chosen a very conspicuous place, but so it proved to be. A housemaid, coming to unbar the door in the early morning, at once saw and seized me, saying—

“‘I’ve caught you, have I? Trying to run away, are you?’ And off she went with me to Ethel’s room.

“‘Please, Miss Ethel,’ she exclaimed, ‘I’ve just found this doll at the hall-door trying to run away.’

“I trembled from head to foot; all came to mind of what my mistress had said to her cousins, and I knew she would keep her word. She flew towards me instantly, crying—

“‘Oh, you ungrateful doll, how dare you?’ and then she *boxed my ears*.

“Oh, your majesty, you may well look shocked; my mistress then added—

“‘I will tell the boys, and *they* will punish you finely, and I won’t protect you a bit.’

“Alas! her threats proved only too true.

“The boys tried me by court-martial, and sentenced me to be hung! I was hoisted up and down from the ceiling, as the common doll had foretold two years ago, and the nursery dolls laughed, and enjoyed my punishment. I kicked, and screamed, but all in vain! those boys exulted over my downfall! But worse than all, your majesty, my mistress, my once dear little mistress, laughed at each fresh insult—this was more than I could bear!”

“I should think so,” said the Queen. “Oh! you dreadful girl,” she added, shaking her head at Ethel.

“I’m *not* a dreadful girl,” exclaimed Ethel; “the doll was mine, and I could do as I liked—besides, she deserved it.”

While she was speaking the ground began to shake under

her, and for once Ethel felt frightened. "Oh dear, what have I done? *I have spoken*," she cried in a tone of alarm.

"You have," said the Queen, "and you do well to tremble. Seize her, my lord! Yet stay—we will hear the remainder of the history, and decide afterwards on the culprit's punishment."

Poor Ethel! she was now really frightened. The Rod's hand was upon her shoulder.

"What shall I do?" she cried as pitifully as her doll had done. "Will no one come to my assistance?"

Poor bandaged Pa-and-Ma looked at her for a moment, as though about to beg her release, but then resumed the description of her own misfortunes:—

"In the struggle for liberty, your majesty, I lost one of my boots—that is why you see me now with only one. They left me suspended from the ceiling for some hours—then took me down and called in a doctor. Bertie was the doctor.

"He said I was to have a cold bath three times a day, a dose of castor oil every hour, and a mustard plaster on my head, for fear my brain was affected. Oh horror! to think that *I* was to be subjected to such treatment! I shudder even now at the thought of it.

“Fortunately for me, there was a new excitement that evening, which prevented the doctor’s prescription being carried out.

“A lovely baby doll arrived for Ethel, a present from one of her aunties. It was a little beauty, with short curly hair—and Ethel named it ‘Cyril’ after her baby brother.

“I appeared to have entirely passed from her mind. I lay trembling in the box for fear the boys should remember me, and I determined again to attempt my escape. They could but kill me, I reflected, if I once more failed.”





CHAPTER XVII.

BACK IN THE DOLL COUNTRY.

“ HAVE little more to add.

“ When all was still that night, I crept out of the room, went downstairs, and stood by a side door leading into the garden, and less used than the one I had first chosen. I lay there shivering all night—and thought of my little mistress snug in bed, with her arms round her baby doll. I saw a garden hat belonging to her lying on the ground. I picked it up and kissed it, and tore off a little bit of the ribbon as a keepsake—see, your majesty, here it is!

“I looked up the stairs, and could fancy I saw my mistress tripping down them, her curls shaking about her shoulders. They were such pretty curls, and fell so softly on your face when she was dressing you!

“ ‘ Good-bye, I called, go-o-ood-bye ! ’ I was choking with emotion.

“ Just then footsteps came near me ! how my heart beat ! Should I be caught as before ?



“ The same housemaid came towards the door—her dress nearly knocked me down. When her hand was upon the lock, some one called her—she turned to answer, opening the door as she did so. I knew she had not seen me ;

fear gave me courage, and I sprang down the steps. I dared not look behind me—down the garden, through the gate, on, on I went—over the fields and stiles, until, wearied out, I paused to rest under the shade of a large tree.

“There was a little pool of water close by ; I bathed my face, and felt refreshed. The journey was a long one, your majesty—I felt weak and faint, but on, on, I dragged my weary limbs, and at last I fell exhausted at the ‘gates of the Doll Country.’

“Your Prime Minister, gracious Queen, received me kindly, and conducted me to your royal presence.

“Ah ! your majesty, if you had refused to protect me, I must have lain down at your feet and *died*.”

“Poor little doll,” said the Queen, with tears in her eyes, “your history is indeed a sad one ; but no doll ever sought our protection in vain ; so rest content, you shall not return to the children’s world, but remain with us to forget, in this happy land, all your past misfortunes. As to your heartless mistress ! she shall receive the punishment so justly merited.”

“Ah ! your majesty,” said the doll, “your kindness overwhelms me ! But let me beg of your majesty to be lenient with dear little Ethel, for, after all, *I love her still !*”

Saying which, she disappeared.

Ethel stood trembling, she was indeed touched by her poor little doll's forgiveness, but she was also greatly afraid. The rods closed round her until she felt quite oppressed.

"Oh! why *did* I come?" she thought. "I will never be unkind to my dolls again—I will tell the Queen so, then perhaps, she will forgive me. And I will never want to be an uninvited guest in strange lands again."

At this moment her majesty spoke.

"Bring forth your prisoner, my lord!" said the Queen; "and let her hear our sentence!"

The Rod turned to the Queen, and bowing said—

"With pleasure, your majesty." He then took hold of poor Ethel's hand, and said with a grin—

"You are in my power at last!"

"Oh! but I don't want to be. Let me go," screamed Ethel, "let me go, I beg. I will never give the Queen cause to be angry again. Do let me go," and she threw herself on the ground.

"Get up," said the Rod in a loud unsparing voice.

"No, I won't! I won't!" she cried.

"But you must get up!"

"I won't. Go away! I won't be whipped."

"You really must get up, Miss Ethel."

"You shan't whip me," I say.

"Bless the child," said Nurse, "whatever *is* the matter with her this morning? I don't want to whip you, my dear. You've been dreaming, my pet."

Ethel sat up in bed, and rubbed her eyes.

"Where is the birch Rod?" she gasped.

"Birch rod!" echoed Nurse, "what do you mean, Miss Ethel? you must indeed have been dreaming. Whenever did any one see a birch rod in *our* nursery?" Ethel stared, first at Nurse, then at the bed.

"Have I been here all night, Nurse?"

Nurse laughed. "Of course you have, Miss Ethel. I should hope so, indeed."

"Are you quite sure, Nurse?"

"Quite sure, dear!"

"Then—it has been *all a dream*! I can scarcely believe it! Why, Nurse, I thought I was in the Doll Country. Such adventures I have had, and I found my Pa-and-Ma doll! and oh, Nurse, she told the Queen of the 'Doll Country' all her history. I really can scarcely believe it to be a dream, for all she said appeared to be true. She told about my brothers trying her by court-martial, and you know,

Nurse, *we did*—oh! dear, dear! it has all been *so real*. And there was a dreadful birch rod, with green eyes, there, who was good to toys and bad to children, and he was going



to whip me! I feel frightened even now when I think of it."

Nurse laughed more heartily than before. "Really you have had a wonderful dream, Miss Ethel, but get up quickly now, dear, it is so late, and when breakfast is over we will

all sit round the nursery fire while you relate it. Your brothers will be interested in it, I'm sure."

A merry smile overspread Ethel's face.

"I expect they will. There was a good deal about them in it. And now just let me look in the wardrobe drawer, Nurse, and see if my character dolls are there, and then I'll get dressed ever so quickly."

And regardless of taking cold, Ethel ran out on to the landing, and opened the drawer. . . .

"Yes! there they are!" she exclaimed. "Robinson Crusoe, Alice, Bo-peep, and all of them! Well! well! was ever anything so real? I was certain I had been in the '*Doll Country*,' and heard my poor doll relate her doleful history! And the prettiest thing there was a sweet little fairy doll, and I will try to get one like it."



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